

At least 20 axed to death in Algerian massacre

ALGIERS (AFP) — Women and children were axed and knifed to death in a weekend massacre by suspected Islamists that left at least 20 dead southwest of Algiers, according to reports in Monday's newspapers.

The pro-government daily L'Authentique put the toll at 27 dead, while the security forces said on Sunday that 20 people had been killed and four injured in the attack on the hamlet of Haouch Mecharef, near Freneda, 250 kilometres from the capital.

The armed group struck on Saturday night. A journalist for El Watan, who visited the morgue, saw among the corpses "the body of an infant barely three months old, its throat cut, its face still smiling. Next to it was the body of a woman several months pregnant and her 10-year-old daughter. A bit further away, there was the body of a two-year-old girl."

One survivor told Le Matin that a woman had pleaded

with the assailants to spare the life of her seven-month-old baby in vain. The terrified mother had to watch while her baby's throat was slit before being killed in her turn.

Security forces alerted by an inhabitant turned up to find the bodies, including that of a 70-year-old woman, lying in a pool of blood.

"The faces had been mutilated with axes. One victim who had been axed to death was clutching a handful of hair, indicating that she had struggled with her killers."

The armed group looted the premises and left behind clothes "worn to threads and foully stinking," taking with them the personal belongings of their victims.

A survivor described the attackers as numbering around 20, with "long, dirty hair and beards."

"I struggled, one of them felled me with an axe blow. Seeing me on the ground, they left me for dead," an injured survivor said.

Algerian Interior Minister Mostefa Benmansour went to the scene and urged inhabitants to take up arms to defend themselves, the newspapers said.

Last Thursday a family of eight was slaughtered in the same region. According to La Tribune, four children were tortured to death, their arms and legs were cut off and their eyes gouged out in front of their parents.

Two people were killed on Saturday at Berrouhja, 100 kilometres south of Algiers. One man was found with his throat cut after being kidnapped. His body had been "booby-trapped" and a member of a self-defence force was fatally wounded in moving it.

Several papers also reported that two bombers had been killed on Sunday when their devices exploded at Blida, 50 kilometres south of Algiers. Two other bombs were defused in Algiers on Wednesday and Friday.

The toll of another attack on

Friday night at Setif, 250 kilometres southeast of the capital, has gone up to seven with the deaths of three victims wounded, according to El Watan.

Armed extremists have stepped up bomb attacks in Algiers and other towns in the past few days as the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan, the bloodiest so far in the six-year Islamist insurgency, draws to its close on Wednesday. In one week, nearly 30 people have been killed, at least five of them bombers killed by their own home-made devices.

But such attacks have had a limited impact this year in comparison with the devastating campaign of car bombs in Ramadan 1997, when dozens of people were killed in Algiers.

Le Matin had three theories as to why the bombers have been less successful: the extreme watchfulness of citizens, the impressive presence of security forces and the difficulty terrorist groups are hav-

ing in recruitment, forcing them to use inexperienced bombers.

"Terrorists don't have the necessary equipment" to manufacture powerful bombs since authorities dismantled networks and closed down workshops, Le Matin contended.

The newspapers all reminded people to be particularly vigilant during the traditional three-day feast of 'Eid Al Fitr which marks the end of the fasting month.

Most Western estimates put the toll from six years of killings in Algeria at more than 60,000, while the military-backed regime maintains that the toll among civilians and security forces is over 26,000.

The insurgency broke out after the government in January 1992 cancelled the second round of elections which the since-banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.



PROTEST IN BEIRUT: The outlaw dissident branch of the Lebanese Labour Workers Union (LWU), led by the ousted head of the General Confederation of Workers of Lebanon Elias Abu Rizk (C), demonstrate Monday in Beirut to protest against tax increases. Mr. Abu Rizk is flanked by two MPs representing the Hizbollah party (AFP photo)

Turkish state mafia sought to kill Georgian president — PM aide

ANKARA (AFP) — A gang of renegade Turkish state security officials and mafia leaders attempted to assassinate Georgia's President Eduard Shevardnadze over casino business disputes in 1995, a close aide to Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz was quoted as saying Monday.

"The state gang was involved in an assassination attempt against Shevardnadze" over gambling affairs in the former Soviet republic, Turkish state minister for economic matters, Eyup Asik, said in remarks published in the right-wing Istanbul daily Zaman.

He said a diplomatic crisis was averted only when the Turkish foreign ministry apologised to Georgia after the 1995 incident. Mr. Asik did not give other details.

The scandal involving Turkish security forces and mafia groups could have serious ramifications outside the country, according to an official report cited by the Turkish press at the weekend.

The report, presented to Mr. Yilmaz, claims that casinos built in two other former Soviet republics, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, were funded by the

Turkish state, the Istanbul daily Radikal said.

According to the newspaper, Azerbaijani President Geidar Aliyev agreed to have a casino built in the former Soviet republic to pay off a \$6 million debt incurred by his son, Ilham Aliyev.

Mr. Aliyev allegedly owed the money to Omer Lutfi Topal, a gambling mogul who built the casinos in the two republics. Topal was mysteriously killed in July 1996 in Istanbul.

In Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan's capital, Topal built three hotel-casinos also using Turkish taxpayers' money, Radikal reported.

The state-mafia scandal broke in November 1996 following a road accident in the western Turkish town of Susurluk in which a mafia leader and a police chief were killed and a politician, Sedat Bucak, was injured while travelling in the same car.

The three men's presence in the same vehicle revealed the existence of covert relations between the police, the Turkish mafia and certain politicians.

Mr. Bucak was an MP from former Turkish prime minister

Tansu Ciller's conservative True Path Party. His parliamentary immunity was lifted last month to allow an investigation.

Last month, Mr. Yilmaz ordered an investigation, led by Inspector Kurtul Savas, into the infiltration state institutions by the mafia and ultra-nationalist groups.

In his report, cited by Radikal, Mr. Savas underlined the role of the mafia leader and former right-wing militant, Abdullah Catli, in the murder of Topal.

The report also confirmed allegations that ultra-nationalist groups were trained by the security forces and had been authorised to kill on behalf of the state.

The groups were allegedly contracted to murder Kurdish businessmen suspected of funding the separatist rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

An operation to murder Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader, in Syria was also set up by these groups, the report said. "All these covert operations were part of the state's 'battle against terrorism in the interests of the state,'" it added.

Former Israeli MP arrested for fraud

SAVYON (AFP) — A former Israeli member of parliament was arrested Monday on suspicion of trying to defraud a British insurance company of \$9 million, police said.

Samuel Flatto-Sharon is suspected of falsely claiming that four valuable paintings belonging to him were destroyed in a fire which rav-

aged a Tel Aviv gallery in March 1997.

Mr. Flatto-Sharon reported losses of \$9 million to a British insurance company, which was not identified, police said.

According to police, investigators found that Mr. Flatto-Sharon's paintings were never sent to the gallery.

Four other men were arrested along with Mr. Flatto-Sharon at the businessman's residence in Savyon, a suburb of Tel Aviv, police said.

Mr. Flatto-Sharon was convicted in absentia for fraud in France in the 1970s but took refuge in Israel. He also spent several months in jail in Israel for electoral fraud.

Iranian hardliners disrupt opposition leader's memorial, rough up participants

TEHRAN (AFP) — Islamist hardliners disrupted a memorial service for Islamist liberal opposition leader Mehdi Bazargan in north-western Iran and roughed up the participants, a newspaper reported Monday.

A group of young vigilantes, calling themselves Hizbollah, stormed a mosque in the city of Tabriz, East Azerbaijan province, where the service was being held, and punched and kicked speakers and organisers.

They shouted slogans in support of the Islamic Republic, grabbed the microphone and declared

they "will not allow such ceremonies to be held against the regime," Salam daily said.

The hardliners then forced the speakers and organisers to leave the mosque and continued to beat up people outside it, including bystanders, the paper added.

Salam said a "handful" of policemen present were unable to control the situation.

Similar attacks have taken place in other Iranian cities in the past week during memorial services for Bazargan, a former prime minister turned dissident who died three years ago.

In Tehran, several thousand people turned out at a service for Bazargan Thursday under police protection following threats of attacks by Islamist hardliners.

The service was originally scheduled for two days earlier, but was cancelled after Hizbollah attacked and beat up several hundred mourners gathered outside a mosque.

Bazargan, the former head of Iran's Freedom Movement, headed an interim government after the 1979 revolution, but was forced to resign over disagreements with the clergy.

The Iranian interior ministry, headed by moderate cleric Abdullah Nuri, has criticised the hardliners for resorting to violence to settle political scores.

The vigilante attacks on intellectuals, movie theatres and moderate newspapers have become a source of conflict between the moderate and conservative factions of government.

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, who was elected in a landslide in May promising to establish the rule of law and enhance personal and political freedom, has sharply criticised such acts of violence.

Israeli PM considering 'measures' against Iran

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that he would continue diplomatic efforts to stop Iran from arming but was also considering "other measures" in case diplomacy failed.

Mr. Netanyahu told the Israeli parliament's foreign affairs and defence committee that Iran represented the most serious armed threat to Israel since its creation 50 years ago, Public Radio reported.

"It threatens our life, our existence and our vital interests, and consequently, we are taking the necessary measures to avoid that Israel's existence is threatened," he said.

He said it was possible that diplomatic routes would prove fruitless.

"There are other measures that we are preparing in case diplomatic efforts fail," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu said that if Iranian President Mohammad Khatami wanted to show moderation, he should first stop arming with long-range missiles which are offensive as well as defensive.

Israel has asked the United States and Russia in try to prevent Iran from acquiring long-range missiles and non-conventional weapons.

Monday's signing ceremony came as U.S. and Israeli officials continued efforts to resolve a dispute concerning a Jewish-American teenager who took refuge in Israel after being accused of murdering a man in a Washington D.C. suburb.

Samuel Sheinbein sought to avoid extradition to the United States by claiming Israeli nationality on the basis of his father's Israeli citizenship. Under Israeli law, Israeli citizens may not be extradited.

Israel's failure to quickly turn Sheinbein over to U.S. authorities sparked protests in the United States and U.S. Secretary of State

Madeleine Albright personally intervened with Mr. Netanyahu over the affair. The U.S. Congress also held up disbursement of financial aid to Israel to show its displeasure.

Israel's attorney general subsequently rejected Sheinbein's claim of nationality and the U.S. extradition request is currently being considered by the Israeli courts.

Sheinbein has been held in an Israeli jail since his arrival in the country in September.

His lawyer, former justice minister David Libai, is fighting Sheinbein's extradition, saying the suspect's claim to Israeli nationality is legitimate.

WHO warns of increasing disease problem in Iraq caused by sanctions

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The World Health Organisation (WHO) warned Monday that a persistent lack of medicines in Iraq was dramatically increasing the spread of disease.

"The level of care has fallen seriously and many illnesses have reappeared because of the continuous lack of medicines since the implementation of the

[economic] embargo" by the United Nations in 1990, said Habib Rajab, WHO representative in Baghdad.

"Illnesses such as tuberculosis, malaria and cholera have become commonplace in the past few years because of malnutrition, dirty water and a lack of medicines," Mr. Rajab told the Nabd Al Shahab

newspaper.

He said the amount of money given to buying medicines under the "oil-for-food" accord between Baghdad and the United Nations was "a drop in the ocean."

Under the terms of the accord which came into force in December 1996, Iraq is allowed to sell \$2 billion of oil every six

months to buy food and medicines for its sanctions-hit people, and to pay war reparations and U.N. costs.

Around \$200 million of the total are set aside to buy medicines.

The deal was the first easing of the sanctions slapped on Iraq in August 1990 after its invasion of neighbouring Kuwait.

U.S., Israel sign pact to improve cooperation in fighting international crime

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel and the United States signed a legal assistance treaty Monday aimed at improving cooperation in the fight against international organised crime.

"This treaty will better enable our governments to cooperate on combating transnational organised

crime," said U.S. Ambassador Edward Walker after signing the pact with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty provides mechanisms for cooperation in collecting and providing evidence, taking testimony from witnesses, transferring witnesses and

suspects and seizing assets of convicted criminals, officials said.

The treaty, which has been under negotiation since 1994, does not address the controversial issue of extradition, which is covered by a 1963 agreement.

The United States has signed similar bilateral treaties with 35 other

nations.

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14:10	Sandokan		
14:30	French Programmes		
16:15	Prayers		
16:30	Believe and Behave		
17:00	Skippy		
17:30	Square One TV		
18:00	Gillene Sports		
18:30	News Headlines		
18:35	A Whole New Ballgame		
19:00	News in French		
19:15	Ramadan Talks		
19:35	Black Hat Chef		
20:00	What Would You Do?		
20:30	Encounter		
21:10	Hollywood Remembers		
22:00	News in English		
22:30	Marguerite Volant		
23:15	Feature film: "The First Season"		
23:59	Islam in a Changing World		
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Northern Ireland peace process at critical juncture

LONDON (AFP) — The Northern Ireland talks reached a critical juncture Monday, as London and Dublin had to decide whether to exclude the political arm of a Protestant militia which has admitted recent murders of Catholics.

A sense of urgency surrounded the negotiations on the future of the British-ruled province, which moved to London Monday, less than 48 hours after Protestant violence in Ulster claimed its eighth Catholic victim.

Irish Foreign Minister David Andrews said the British and Irish governments were "between a rock and a hard place" over the future of the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) at the negotiations.

"It is a very, very serious matter from the point of view of both governments and the whole talks process," he told Irish RTE radio.

Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, also stressed the gravity of the situation, promising as she entered the talks that the issue would be dealt with "as soon as possible."

The expectation is that

London and Dublin will seek to allow the UDP, the political wing of the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), to stay in the talks despite the UFF's claim of responsibility Friday for several of the recent Catholic murders. Security forces in Belfast said they were involved in three killings.

None of the eight political parties representing both pro-Ireland Catholic and pro-Britain Protestant communities in the talks has so far explicitly called for the UDP's exclusion.

But the multi-faith Alliance party said it will — at the very least — demand the temporary suspension of the UDP, unless London and Dublin take action to penalise the Protestant "loyalist" paramilitaries' political wing.

The sectarian violence, which in total has left two Protestants and eight Catholics dead since Christmas, constitutes the gravest threat to the talks since the peace process acquired fresh momentum last October.

The murders in the province effectively contravene the Mitchell principles of non-violence enunciated

by the chairman of the peace talks, former U.S. Senator George Mitchell.

But security spokesman for the largest Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, Ken Maginnis, said he feared an escalation of violence if the UDP was ejected.

"If we drive (the UDP) from the table I wonder what these men of violence will do," he told BBC radio.

The expulsion of the UDP could cause the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), the other Protestant party representing a loyalist militia, to walk out of the talks, thereby jeopardising the 1994 Protestant ceasefire.

This in turn could put pressure on the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which has also been observing a ceasefire since July 1997, to return to violence.

Leader of the UDP, Gary McMichael, warned: "If we are thrown out of the talks... it is going to be very difficult for us to argue to them (the paramilitaries) that the way forward is a democratic one."

For the first time since the peace process began in June 1996, the talks are taking place in London, in a bid to

take negotiators out of the context of mounting local tension.

London and Dublin have imposed a May deadline for reaching a solution.

But when discussion turns to tackling new details of cross-border institutions and Dublin's role in them, negotiators representing the British and Irish governments will be walking a tightrope between Protestant unionists and Catholic republicans.

The IRA, represented at the talks by its political wing Sinn Fein, last week rejected the latest Anglo-Irish blueprint for the negotiations claiming it was biased towards the Protestant community.

The degree of Irish involvement in any Northern Ireland settlement is crucial to Sinn Fein, which wants a united Ireland.

But the Ulster Unionists have also warned they might pull out of the talks if changes were made to a key document to cement links with Ireland.

Since 1969, more than 3,200 people have died as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland.



Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams (left), accompanied by chief negotiator Martin McGuinness, speaks to reporters upon arrival at a session of the Northern Ireland peace talks at Lancaster House, central London (Reuters photo)

U.S. astronaut fails to fit into Russian space suit on Mir

HOUSTON, Texas (AFP) — An unexpected glitch developed when U.S. astronaut Andrew Thomas showed up in the shuttle Endeavour to replace his colleague David Wolf aboard the Russian space station Mir Sunday. His Russian space suit did not fit.

Thomas will be the seventh and last U.S. astronaut to work aboard Mir, and his scheduled four-month stint aboard the ageing space platform constitutes the first phase of a new joint, U.S.-Russian space cooperation programme.

The space suit fiasco did not immediately threaten to scuttle the mission, and Thomas will try to resolve the situation with help from Mission Control later in the day.

Mir and Endeavour rendezvoused Saturday at 2014 GMT at an altitude of 383 kilometres above the Earth, as the station passed over Russia, NASA said.

Around 2200 GMT Sunday, Endeavour Commander Terry Wilcutt and Mir Commander Anatoli Solov'ev shook hands after the airlock connecting the two craft was opened.

The crews — seven Americans and three Russians — then gathered aboard Mir for a welcoming ceremony followed by a meal.

At first the mission was going according to plans: U.S. astronaut Bonnie Dunbar, the only woman

on the mission, supervised the transfer of three tonnes of supplies and material, including air conditioning equipment and a new computer, from the shuttle to Mir.

Thomas then began several of the 26 experiments he will monitor on Mir in the growth of human tissue and breast cancer cells, in a quest for new cancer treatments.

But when Thomas tried on his custom-made Russian space suit, he was surprised to find that it was too small. Thomas struggled with the suit for more than an hour, then settled on wearing the space suit left by Wolf.

However the sleeves on Wolf's suit were too large, and Thomas was able to move around inside it with difficulty.

Thomas needs the suit to travel back to earth aboard the Soyuz spaceship — which is attached to the Mir — in case of an emergency.

"We will spend some time to determine if any redesigning would be possible," NASA mission control officials here told him. The officials are hoping for new tests with the space suit Monday.

"Where should I sleep tonight, in Mir or on the shuttle?" Mr. Thomas asked, somewhat worried, when he realised the suit did not fit.

For safety reasons the mission control handlers sent him back to the shuttle

after some discussion.

But about an hour later, after consulting with their Russian Space Agency counterparts in Moscow, NASA let Wolf return to the Endeavour and Thomas remain aboard the Mir.

In case of an emergency exit Thomas would use Wolf's suit, a solution NASA concluded was "not optimal" but nevertheless "safe."

Wolf, who was hoping to definitely leave Mir after 119 days in space, will have to remain in orbit at least one more night.

Additional mission research is being conducted in the shuttle's Spacelab laboratory, focusing on plants, human biology and the growth of protein crystals used by the pharmaceutical industry.

The crews also tried out a device for recycling water in a zero-gravity atmosphere, which will be crucial to life on Alpha.

The crews of Endeavour and Mir also will look into ways to design the interior of the future international space station to ensure the safety of crews set to begin working on the station in 1999.

The two ships will separate on Jan. 29. Endeavour is scheduled to return to Florida on Jan. 31.

Alpha will be used for a wide range of scientific experiments. Russian space officials plan to keep Mir in service until late 1999, despite a spate of accidents and breakdowns last year.

Key N. Korean official dismissed 'for illness'

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea Monday announced the departure for health reasons of its Youth League head in what appeared to be the first tangible sign of a continuing purge.

Pyeongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said that Choe Ryong-Hae had been dismissed as the head of the Kim Il-Sung Socialist Youth League, a key pillar of the Communist regime.

Mr. Choe, believed to be in his late 40s, was succeeded by Ri Il-Hwan, an unknown, as first secretary of the Central Committee of the League.

Mr. Ri, who has so far remained incognito to the outside world, has never been listed as holding any key office in the North.

The replacement was made at the 14th plenary meeting of the League's Central Committee which took place in Pyongyang from Jan. 23 to Jan. 25, KCNA said.

"It (the meeting) relieved Choe Ryong-Hae of his office as first secretary of the central committee for his illness," it said.

Neither KCNA, nor a simultaneous Central Broadcasting dispatch, elaborated on Mr. Choe's departure nor gave any information on his replacement's background.

Mr. Choe, son of Choe Hyon, an old revolutionary and colleague of the late president Kim Il-Sung, was considered one of the confidants of the North's supreme leader Kim Jong-Il.

Mr. Choe's replacement came after at least seven senior officials of the Youth League, including Choe Hyon-Dok, one of seven secretaries of the Central Committee of the Youth League, were reportedly executed in mid-September.

Choe Hyon-Dok, then president of a trading company operated by the Youth League, was shot together with the six others in an open execution in Pyongyang.

In South Pyongyang Province, a well-informed source in Tokyo said earlier this month. The seven were charged with treason after they were allegedly bought by South Korean intelligence authorities while they were engaged in trading with South Koreans in China, the Tokyo source said.

Together with the Korean People's Army and the ruling Workers Party of Korea, the Youth League, once known as Socialist Workers and Youth League, was considered as "one of three pillars" supporting the Communist regime in Pyongyang.

With a membership of eight million and a nationwide organisation, the League is the traditional breeding ground for North Korean power elites.

The League was so trusted by Kim Jong-Il that it had the honour of taking the name of his late father, Kim Il-Sung.

In a separate incident in mid-September, So Kwan-Hi, the ruling Workers Party secretary in charge of agriculture, and four-star general Ri Bong-Won of the political bureau of the Korean People's Army, were also put to death, reports and the Tokyo source said.

Mr. So was executed in Pyongyang, while Mr. Ri's execution was closed to the public.

Mr. So and Mr. Ri allegedly belonged to a five-member spy ring operated by the South for many years, the source said.

Following the two incidents, a sweeping clear-out of the party and the Youth League has been under way, which Pyongyang hopes to finish by early next month, the source told AFP.

A South Korean official monitor told AFP Monday: "I think there will be some more personnel changes like this one in the North to strengthen Kim Jong-Il's power base."

EU FM's meet on Algeria, Kurdish refugees

BRUSSELS (R) — European Union foreign ministers met Monday to discuss how the 15-nation bloc could help end the bloodshed in Algeria and how it should tackle a recent influx of Kurdish refugees into the EU.

They would also discuss relations with China, Russia, the United States, Iran and Turkey and the state of the Middle East process and the situation in former Yugoslavia.

British Junior Foreign Minister Derek Fatchett will report on the mission to Algeria, which failed to win concessions from the government there to request for an independent inquiry into the killings that have escalated sharply this year.

But Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf agreed to visit London to continue discussing the conflict.

"We'll be hearing his (Fatchett's) report and considering what further steps Europe can take," British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said.

"I would stress that Europe is very willing to do everything it can to try and bring an end to the suffering of the Algerian people," he told reporters as he arrived.

Mr. Cook, who chaired Monday's meeting, said the EU would need to explore to what extent the EU would be able to get the willing cooperation of Algeria in this objective.

Other ministers recognised the difficulties involved in finding a solution to the crisis, which erupted in 1992 after Algeria cancelled a general election dominated by Islamists.

"I don't believe in miracles," Finnish Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen told Reuters. But she said the visit to Algeria was a necessary and welcome step and "better than nothing."

Asked whether the EU could actually do anything to help stop the carnage, Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo said: "At least we can expose our commitment to the drama. Another question is whether we can find a solution. It is very difficult."

Algerian authorities, who oppose outside intervention, blame Muslim fundamentalist rebels for the violence and reject EU calls for an international investigation and offers of humanitarian aid.

They told the visiting EU "troika" that what they most wanted was a European crackdown on networks of exiled Islamic fundamentalists which they say are operating from Europe.

Algeria hotly denies suspicions that their own forces may be stoking the violence, which has claimed an estimated 65,000 victims.

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos told Reuters the EU should intensify the dialogue with Algeria and insist that it should show more transparency.

He acknowledged that the EU could not intervene but said it could put "persuasive pressure" on the government.

Monday's meeting was also expected to adopt an action plan tackling the recent flood into southern Europe of Kurdish refugees from Iraq and Turkey, it covers humanitarian aid, EU asylum and visa policies and police and customs cooperation.

Tuesday, the ministers will hold a first meeting of the EU/Russia Cooperation Council, with Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

Yeltsin vows to keep Russian government under control

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, who has criticised the Russian government for failing to meet its promises in 1997, said Monday he would keep the cabinet's activities this year under tough personal supervision.

The Kremlin Press office said Mr. Yeltsin had met Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to discuss the government's list of priorities for 1998, which Mr. Yeltsin hopes could become the first year of stable economic growth.

"I think it's good that I and Viktor Stepanovich (Chernomyrdin) have prepared such a precise and clear

document," Interfax news agency quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying in reference to the list of 12 priority tasks.

"No one will now be able to neglect his responsibilities because they are fixed for every person in the plan," he added.

Mr. Yeltsin said the tasks included reducing taxes on overburdened Russian enterprises but gave no further details.

First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov and Mr. Yeltsin's advisor Alexander Livshits are expected to unveil the plan in detail at a news conference later Monday.

Mr. Yeltsin said he would

monitor closely how the ministers carried out the plan.

Last week the president had lambasted the government for failing to meet a widely publicised promise to pay huge wage arrears to tens of millions of state employees by the end of 1997.

However, he later switched the blame to officials in some of Russia's 89 regions, saying the government had done its job well and on time after all.

The problem of wage arrears has become a major social problem in Russia and could be a key factor in parliamentary elections due next year and in presidential polls in 2000.

Taleban, opposition clash in northern Afghanistan

KABUL (AFP) — Heavy clashes between Taleban fighters and forces loyal to opposition warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam have erupted in the northern Afghan town of Baghlan, independent sources reported Monday.

The fighting has been raging for three days to the south of an enclave of Taleban support amid so far unsuccessful opposition attempts to dislodge the militia from northern Afghanistan, Western and Afghan sources said.

The sources — who requested not to be identified — said the battles have been the heaviest to erupt in the area for months but have yet to bring any major change in frontline positions.

The two opposing sides were reported to be pro-Taleban ethnic Pashtun natives of the Kunduz enclave, and ethnic-Uzbek troops loyal to ex-Communist warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam.

No further details on the clashes were immediately available, but sources in the area said local residents were hoping the renewed fighting against the Taleban might help keep a lid on factional tensions within the anti-Taleban coalition.

Taleban troops have held the northern province of Kunduz since last May when an expeditionary force sent to help seize the north became trapped north of the towering Hindu Kush mountains.

Gaining the support of their fellow ethnic-Pashtuns in Kunduz, the Taleban have used the enclave — which is supplied by air — to launch successive and often embarrassing attacks on their northern rivals.

From the town of Baghlan, 240 kilometres north of Kabul, the Taleban threaten the town of Pul-i-Khumri which lies on the main highway and key opposition supply route linking northern Afghanistan to areas north of Kabul.

The Taleban control two-thirds of Afghanistan including the capital Kabul which they seized in September 1996.

Successive attempts by the Taleban to seize the north and opposition efforts to retake Kabul have ended in a bitter stalemate with neither side appearing to hold the military edge.

The anti-Taleban alliance includes Dostam, the ousted Kabul government led by deposed President Burhanuddin Rabbani and commander Ahmad Shah Masood, as well as the Shiite Muslim faction Hezb-i-Wahdat.



Twelve-year-old Lai Sze-Nga (centre) from China is greeted by her parents Lai Cheuk-Fong (left) and Ng Mei-Lei after a Hong Kong high court allowed her to stay in the territory (Reuters photo)

January 27, 1998
EU FM
meet on
Algeria
Kurdish
refugees
BRUSSELS (R) — European Union ministers met Monday to discuss how the EU could help ease the influx of refugees from the Middle East. They would also discuss the situation in the Balkans, the United States and Turkey, and the state of the Middle East. The ministers also discussed the situation in the Balkans, the United States and Turkey, and the state of the Middle East. The ministers also discussed the situation in the Balkans, the United States and Turkey, and the state of the Middle East.

Cambodian government destroys weapons in elections 'goodwill gesture'

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's two prime ministers Monday presided over the destruction of 1,500 automatic weapons, an event they termed a show of goodwill ahead of July's scheduled elections.

The weapons, mostly ageing Chinese-made SKS rifles, AK-47s, mounted machine guns and a few B-40 rocket launchers, were steamrollered in an elaborate ceremony after being confiscated from local militias over the past six months.

"This demolition of arms signifies the goodwill of the government and the (armed forces) in safeguarding security, public order and in strengthening a state ruled by law," said powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.

He added that the destruction of the weapons would help create "a neutral political atmosphere for the sake of implementing multi-party democracy especially for holding the forthcoming election in a free, fair and credible atmosphere on July 26, 1998."

Officials said more than 22,000 weapons had been collected across the country and would be destroyed in separate ceremonies.

Hun Sen applauded the government's confiscation and destruction of the weapons, which he contrasted with the actions of the resistance movement loyal to ousted co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh, whom he effectively ousted in July.



French President Jacques Chirac waves as he arrives to watch India's Republic Day parade in New Delhi as Indian President K.R. Narayanan (centre) looks on (Reuters photo)

Violence mars India's Republic Day celebrations

NEW DELHI (R) — India's Republic Day celebrations Monday were marred by a spate of killings in the insurgency-ravaged state of Jammu and Kashmir and the country's restive northeast.

Police said 10 men, five women and two children were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in a Hindu community village outside Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, Sunday night.

A local news agency report said the killers torched a Hindu temple after firing indiscriminately at the villagers.

At least a dozen militant groups are fighting for Kashmir's independence or merger with neighbouring Pakistan. Officials say more than 20,000 people have been killed since the revolt in the Muslim-majority state began in 1990.

India, which controls two-thirds of Kashmir, accuses Pakistan of arming and training separatist guerrillas. Pakistan, which rules the remainder, denies the charge and says it only provides political and diplomatic support to the rebels.

The violence came ahead of nationwide celebrations Monday to celebrate the country's 50th republic day.

The nation's main parade in the capital, New Delhi, went ahead without a hitch. About 15,000 security personnel were mobilised for the elaborate display and its chief guest, French President Jacques Chirac, looked on from a bullet-proof stand.

More than 25,000 people flocked to Raj path, the tree-lined avenue that cuts a broad swathe through the heart of New Delhi, to watch a colourful show of India's military might, history and cultural diversity.

Tanks and armoured cars rolled by, fighter jets roared through a wintry blue sky and helicopters hovered overhead, showering the audience with rose petals. Soldiers marched or trotted on horses and camels, and military bands played.

They were followed by a stream of floats depicting scenes from India's past and present, including one with a giant model of the spiritual father of independence, Mahatma Gandhi.

Various separatist guerrilla groups in the hilly northeast have jointly called for a general strike to boycott the celebrations, ahead of which police seized large caches of arms, ammunition and explosives.

"We have decided to boycott the celebration because such an occasion is a moment of happiness for those who have violated our human rights, suppressed the right of self-determination of small nationalities and exploited our resources," said Arabinada Rajkhowa, head of the Maoist United Liberation Front of Assam.

India's northeastern region, made up of seven states and home to more than 200 ethnic tribes and groups, has been rocked by separatist violence since India won independence 50 years ago.

The ethnic groups blame New Delhi for exploiting their rich mineral and forest resources, ignoring the regional economy and social welfare and flooding of the region with non-tribals from neighbouring Bangladesh and other areas of India.

The Great Wall, the first parts of which were built during the Qin dynasty in 221-207 BC with the intention of keeping out invaders, snakes 6,000 km across northern China.

North China earthquake cracks Great Wall

BEIJING (R) — A strong earthquake that struck northern China this month has caused cracks in parts of the ancient Great Wall, a government official said Monday.

Cracks in the 2,000-year-old wall opened up when the tremor, measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale, rocked Hebei province's Zhangjiakou region on Jan. 10, said He Yong, director of the local administration of cultural relics.

"The section of the Great Wall in the whole earthquake area has suffered certain degrees of cracking," he said by telephone.

The cracks are about the width of a person's thumb," he said.

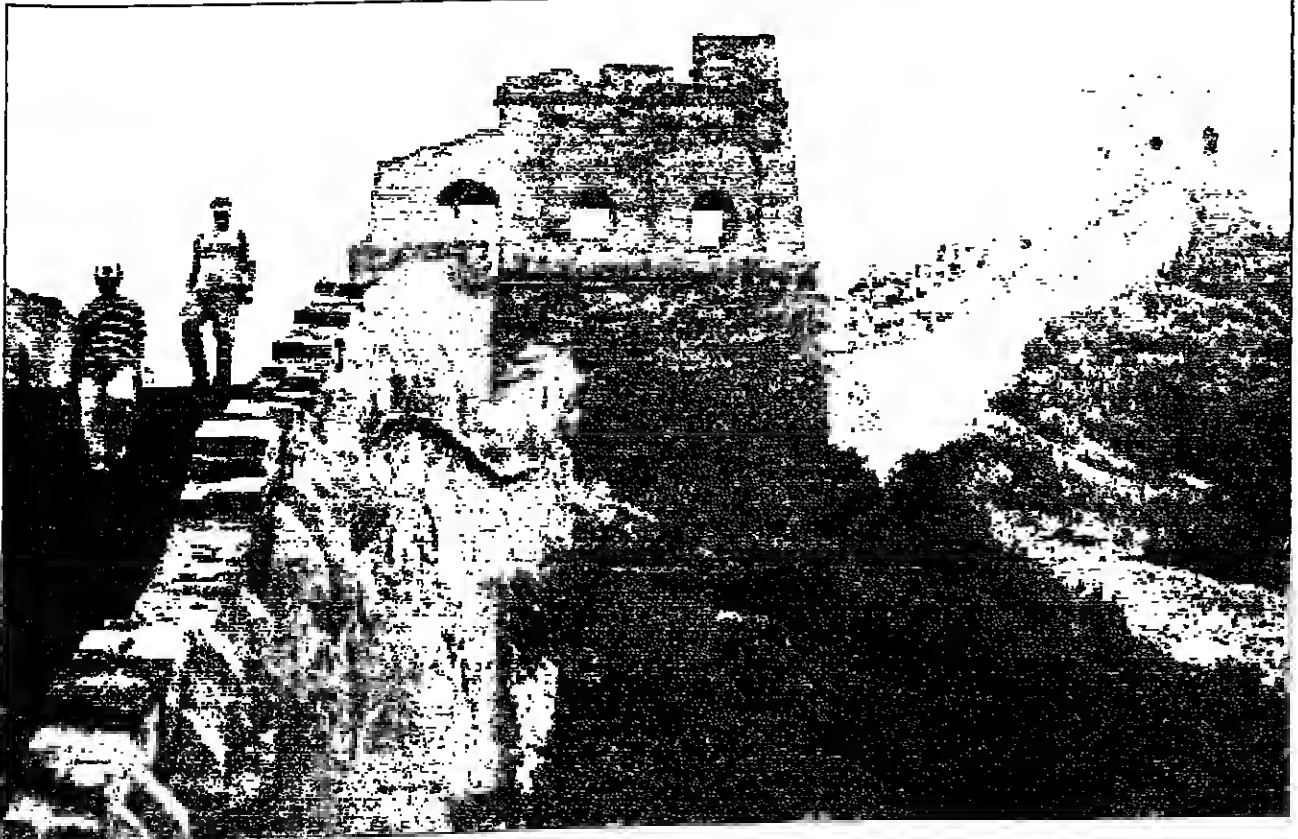
The Hebei earthquake — which killed 50 people, injured more than 10,000 and left tens of thousands homeless in sub-zero temperatures — also damaged ancient buildings, he said.

The safety of tourists would not be affected by the damage, he added.

More than 20 ancient buildings, pagodas and grottoes are located in the quake-hit areas, state media reported.

Most of the relics, including the Zhangjiakou section of the Great Wall, were built during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD).

The Great Wall, the first parts of which were built during the Qin dynasty in 221-207 BC with the intention of keeping out invaders, snakes 6,000 km across northern China.



Tourists visit the Great Wall of China decorated with red umbrellas, part of an annual 'art event', at Simatai, northeast of the national capital. A strong earthquake that struck northern China this month has caused cracks the size of a man's thumb in parts of the ancient Great Wall (Reuters photo)

White House supporters lash out in Clinton sex scandal

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Supporters of President Bill Clinton lashed out against his enemies in carefully worded statements on television talk shows Sunday, as the sexual scandal that has embroiled the top executive showed no sign of abating.

Leading the charge was former Clinton advisor James Carville, who promised a "war" between "the friends of the president" and the investigation team led by special counsel Kenneth Starr over allegations that Mr. Clinton had sex with a 21-year-old White House intern, then pressured her to lie about the relationship.

"Friends of the president are disgusted by these kinds of tactics. We're going to fight and we're going to fight very hard," the feisty Carville warned.

The battle of words raged all day on the television political talk shows, a crucial barometer of Washington's political momentum.

Characterising Mr. Starr's investigation as "nothing more than a vendetta against the president" Mr. Carville said the special counsel was frustrated he had been unable to dig up any dirt on the president in his probes into Whitewater and other White House affairs.

On one talk show William Ginsburg, the attorney for Monica Lewinsky — the former intern at the heart of the controversy — underscored his eagerness to cut a deal with Mr. Starr in exchange for immunity from prosecution for his client.

Ms. Lewinsky, now 24, remained in hiding Sunday as Mr. Ginsburg tried to postpone her scheduled appearance before a grand jury Tuesday.

Ms. Lewinsky denied having sex with Mr. Clinton in a sworn Jan. 7 statement issued to lawyers in the Paula Jones sexual harassment suit, but in tapes secretly recorded by a co-worker she is heard talking about the affair.

Some urged the president to publicly explain the situation before Tuesday's State of the Union address — or to use the keynote speech to set the record straight.

"If there is truth to the allegations, I believe Tuesday night the president should get up before the country and confess serious error on his part and ask for public forgiveness," former White House Communications Director David Gergen told Fox Television.

Mr. Clinton has not spoken about the allegations since Wednesday, when in a interview with the PBS television network and National Public Radio he denied both having had a sexual relationship with Ms. Lewinsky and asking her to lie about it.

Suborning perjury is an impeachable offence in the United States, and could result in Mr. Clinton being ousted from office.

Mr. Clinton's most powerful and trusted allies, including former Commerce Secretary Mickey Kantor, were called to the White House over weekend to cobble together a defence against the worst crisis of his scandal-plagued presidency.

Mr. Starr now has extended those investigations to include the explosive claims about Ms. Lewinsky and Mr. Clinton, which are based on 20 hours of secretly taped conversations between the former intern and her erstwhile Pentagon colleague, Linda Tripp.

The ABC television network reported Sunday that Mr. Starr's investigators were trying to confirm that witnesses caught Ms. Lewinsky and the president in intimate encounters in the White House.

"If it's true, I may have to renew my negotiating in a different way," lawyer Ginsburg told ABC. But Mr. Ginsburg also said independent confirmation may mean "the spotlight will come off her, her testimony is no longer that important."

Starr and his staff will spend their bullets and their money pursuing this from a much more intelligent angle than going after a 24-year-old girl," Mr. Ginsburg said.

Mr. Clinton, who told NBC television that federal agents who searched Ms. Lewinsky's home found no evidence of an affair, was upbeat about Mr. Lewinsky's future. "I do not believe the American public will allow her to go to jail," he said.

Meanwhile Mr. Clinton and first lady Hillary emerged from the White House for the first time in five days to go to church around mid-day, while the lawyer for Monica Lewinsky, the young woman at the heart of the controversy, continued negotiations seeking immunity from prosecution for his client to tell all.

The first couple strode inside arm in arm, appearing relaxed, then smiled and waved as they walked out of the Methodist Church near the White House that they visit most Sundays, stopping to converse briefly with clergy members.

Ms. Lewinsky, now 24, "liked to be the centre of attention," Ms. Franzen told Swedish television in separate remarks Sunday night.

A former co-worker of Ms. Lewinsky has reportedly tape-recorded conversations in which Ms. Lewinsky said she had an 18-month affair with Mr. Clinton and that the president and a close associate of his, Vernon Jordan, urged her to lie about it under oath.

But Ms. Franzen called the alleged affair with Mr. Clinton one of those "invented" by Ms. Lewinsky and said the scandal rocking the White House was a "non-event."

Ms. Franzen has been living in the United States for several years and working as a legal assistant.

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lankan Buddhist organisations Monday accused Britain of responsibility for the suicide bombing of the island's most sacred temple and said they would boycott Prince Charles's visit next month.

The Federation of Buddhist Organisations (FBO) said Britain had supported terrorism in Sri Lanka and helped the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to maintain offices and raise funds for attacks here.

It said Sunday's bombing of the Temple of the Tooth in the central hill resort of Kandy, 112 kilometres east of here, came after the top monk there announced plans to boycott Prince Charles's visit.

"It was Britain which created the (ethnic) problem we have today by bringing Tamils from India and settling them in the north and the east of the country," FBO Secretary Gallege Punyawardena told

reponers. He said the suicide bombing which killed 13 people and badly damaged the 16th century temple was carried out by the LTTE on behalf of the British, whom he accused of wanting to break up the country.

"First they want to break up Sri Lanka, then it will be India and followed by China," said another FBO stalwart, C.M. Madduma Banadara.

Britain had allowed the LTTE to maintain an office in London even after the U.S. government banned the group in October and Canada took similar action, the FBO said.

Sri Lanka's main opposition party said last week it opposed inviting Prince Charles as the main guest at the Feb. 4 celebrations marking the country's 50th anniversary of independence.

Buddhists blame Britain for Tiger bombing of holiest temple

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have been invited for what should have been an essentially a Sri Lankan celebration and the government must be ready to face opposition to his visit.

"This is one occasion we would have preferred to have our President (Kumaratunga), however much we may disagree on other matters," Mr. Wickremesinghe said last week.

"Now that the government has gone and invited him, we are not telling him not to come," Mr. Wickremesinghe said. "Then you have to anticipate problems. You cannot expect people not to show their anger."

His remarks came a day after a top Buddhist monk of the Kandy temple said he would boycott independence celebrations to protest at the presence of Prince Charles, seen by opponents as a symbol of Britain's subjugation of Sri Lanka.

Britain's Queen Mother, 97, undergoes hip surgery after fall

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Queen Mother, 97, underwent surgery on her left hip after breaking it in a fall, Buckingham Palace said Monday.

She underwent a hip replacement operation overnight Sunday, the palace said. "Her Majesty has passed a comfortable night," it added.

The Queen Mother broke her left hip at the royal residence of Sandringham, eastern England, Sunday. Her two daughters, Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret, were also at

Sandringham along with Prince Philip. She apparently fell over while going to watch a horse race on the royal estate. The Queen Mother is a keen follower of horse-racing.

In November 1995 she underwent replacement surgery on her right hip, and this latest operation at the private King Edward VII hospital in London was performed by the same surgeon who carried that out, Roger Vickers.

about with difficulty with the aid of a walking stick. In spite of her age, she continues to fulfil many official duties.

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, widow of King George VI, is regarded as one of the most popular members of the British royal family.

She has previously been in hospital for appendicitis in 1964, and for a fishbone in her throat in 1982, indigestion after eating trout in 1986, choking on a piece of fish in 1993, and an infected leg in 1994.

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Democracy wins

YESTERDAY'S RULING by the High Court of Justice that the temporary press law (enacted by the government unilaterally last May) is unconstitutional is a milestone in the Kingdom's march towards democracy. Not only does the ruling restore full confidence in the impartiality of our judicial system and expel any doubts about its fairness and credibility, it also marks a new era in which governments may not manipulate the Constitution for their own ends.

The temporary law, which had placed further restrictions on the press and led to the closure of a dozen weeklies, is unconstitutional because the two conditions that the Constitution prescribes for the issuance of any temporary laws did not exist in May, the court ruled. There was no grounds for taking "necessary measures that cannot be delayed" or that "require the disbursement of emergency funds." Both reasons do not apply in this case, the court said in its verdict.

While the impact of the court's ruling will soon be felt in the press market, the damage it wrought on the country's body politic will take time to repair. We must recall at this historic moment in our democratic march that the temporary law was one of the major points of contention between the government and the opposition, leading the latter to boycott last year's parliamentary elections. Had it not been for this law and other equally undemocratic measures taken by the government before the elections, our democratic process would be so much more alive and kicking today. The responsibility for passing that unconstitutional piece of legislation rests solely with the government, which had ignored all protestations, petitions and pleas not to tamper with laws while Parliament was in recess.

The first item on the agenda for the Council of Ministers, which meets in a regular session today, should be to admit responsibility for the wrong that was done and to make it clear that the government will abide by the letter and spirit of the court's ruling.

This in effect means abandoning all efforts to cling to all or any part of the temporary law, either by requesting Parliament to continue with debating it as a draft legislation, as the Cabinet has sought to do since the elections, or by adopting delaying tactics until another solution that suits the government is found.

In the name and for the sake of our democratic achievements and the democracy that we have come to believe in as a way of life, the government should accept that the temporary law is null and void and the way to go from here is to go back to the 1993 law until such time when there is a real need for change.

The old piece of legislation does in no way meet the requirements of a free press. It is imperfect at best. But until our experience with freedom of expression and press freedom gains more maturity, we should all refrain from rocking the boat.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Nicola Nasser Monday criticised the Arab countries for keeping silent towards America's mauling of its forces to launch an aggression on Iraq. The Arab and Islamic countries' silence about the U.S. preparations for an attack on Iraq can only be interpreted as a form of direct encouragement to Washington to launch yet another aggression on the Iraqi people, said the writer. He recalled that the recent Gulf states summit held in Kuwait did not elude to the U.S. drive to escalate tension but rather chose to condemn Iraq, accusing it of being the cause of tension in the region. He said the recent Islamic summit in Tehran was void of any mention of the massing of a U.S. armada in the Gulf as if Iraq does not belong to the region and its people are of no importance to them as humans. At the same time the Gulf and the Islamic summits both were void of any mention of continued American support for the Jewish state providing it with conventional and weapons of mass destruction to enable it to secure its permanent domination of the region, according to the writer. He warned that if Iraq disintegrates the repercussions will be detrimental to the whole Arab region.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud said a recent government decision to increase by JD170 the salaries of members of the Parliament means that it can also find means for increasing the salaries of the limited income employees. Daoud said the government can save vast sums of money in order to increase civil servant salaries by, for instance, opting not to renew the furniture of various ministries for five years and by building complexes to house several of government departments together instead of spending millions of dinars annually on renting buildings scattered in various parts of the capital. The writer said the government is incurring many unnecessary expenses in several areas, and these can be saved to improve the living conditions of the employees who are facing endless rising prices. The writer expressed hope that Parliament will not forget the plight of the civil servants now that the senators and deputies have secured for themselves higher salaries. He said the people's representatives are duty bound to seek to improve the living conditions of the public by steering the government's policies towards achieving that goal.

View from the Fourth Circle

Visiting the Holocaust Museum, and beyond

By Rami G. Khouri

IT IS a shame that last week's on-off-on-off visit by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. did not take place, because it would have been useful for all concerned. I say this from my own experience, for on a recent trip to Washington I visited the Holocaust Memorial Museum with an Israeli friend. He could not finish the visit, and departed halfway through. The experience sickened him. I felt a similar revulsion, a physical queasiness in the stomach at what I saw there; but I finished the tour, because I thought it was important to better understand the meaning and the place of the Holocaust in the lives of Jews, Israelis, Arabs, and maybe the whole world.

I'm not surprised, therefore, by the intense feelings expressed in the wake of last week's non-visit by Arafat to the Holocaust Museum. The episode was important for highlighting how very passionately both sides relate to the Holocaust in general, and in particular to how Palestinians address and engage with the Holocaust. These issues touch the very sensitive core of the identity, fears, needs, and goals of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The events of last week were also tragic because they were a missed opportunity. Israelis and Palestinians need to take advantage of every reasonable opportunity to promote mutual learning, understanding, sensitivity, and movement towards a permanent peace accord that could meet the national rights of all in Palestine/Israel. The critical word in the above sentence is "mutual," in my view, for understanding and sensitivity are needed in both directions in order to impact on official peace-making as well as on people-to-people relations.

Those who claim that Arafat and Palestinians wish only to kill Jews and destroy Israel, and those who deny the fact of the Holocaust, should be left alone to express their views to themselves, for they only perpetuate conflict rather than promote justice and peace. A more useful but demanding approach would be to explore why the issue of Arab and Jewish perceptions of the Holocaust elicit such intensity from all concerned. Precisely because Arafat did not visit the Holocaust Museum last week, we must seek other ways to make that Palestinian and Arab journey to understanding the Jewish experi-

ence. Simultaneously, Jews and Israelis must be constantly asked and encouraged to make their own journey into the separately frightening corridors of the Palestinian and Arab encounter with modern history.

I know that my own visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum was beneficial and very worthwhile for me. It left me with several powerful and related feelings: it increased my understanding of the legitimate reasons for the Israeli-Jewish obsession with security; it heightened my appreciation for the important meaning and value of the state of Israel to Jews around the world; it clarified for me the reasons why Israelis attach such strategic, existential importance to land and to their territorial relationships with others in the region; and, it allowed me to better understand the Israeli emphasis on self-reliance, and the reluctance to rely on others for their security or well-being.

The hard issue of "equivalence" is raised as an intellectual and moral red line, asking us not to discuss the Holocaust and the Palestinian issue in the same place or at the same time.

Later, upon further reflection, it also caused me to continue searching for the answer to why Jews, who have so recently suffered such unique and evil pain, cannot relate more forcefully and fairly to the mindset of their Semitic brothers, the Palestinians?

Jews and Israelis object to our raising the issue of the Holocaust in the same context as the Palestinian national tragedy, what the Palestinians call the "nakbe," or catastrophe. The hard issue of "equivalence" is raised as an intellectual and moral red line, asking us not to discuss the Holocaust and the Palestinian issue in the same place

or at the same time. Jews and other Zionists say that the deliberate mass extermination of a people, on the one hand, and the taking of land and creation of a refugee problem, on the other, are issues of very different magnitude.

This difference between Jewish and Palestinian suffering is factually correct. But from the Arab perspective it is politically less compelling. In Arab eyes, many enduring calamities of modern Palestinian and Arab history are intimately associated with the advent and the impact of modern Zionism. Having lived the Palestinian-Jordanian-Arab experience since 1948, I understand and share the Arab reluctance to accept Jewish security, rooted in the Holocaust and other historical facts, as the primary political determinant of the rights of the Palestinian people. This may not be what Jews are saying, or what they intend Arabs to feel. But this is precisely what most Arabs do feel, and what we do hear from the Israelis: that our inalienable rights as human beings and our sovereign rights as nations are conditional upon the priority implementation of the Jewish people's right never again to suffer such evils and horrors as they were subjected to throughout history.

Such sentiments are hard for both sides to hear; but they must be heard, and they must be understood. For beneath the verbalisation of such ideas lies the key to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict — by acknowledging, addressing and removing the fears of both sides. My recent visit to the Holocaust Museum opened my eyes to one way of achieving this goal. Israelis should explore Arab views with more sensitivity and daring, in the same spirit that Arabs should make a greater effort to appreciate the full meaning of history and the Holocaust to the Jewish people.

But this is not happening on any meaningful scale. But this month has reminded us that neither real security nor lasting peace will come soon to Arabs or Israelis, for we both still struggle separately with the agonies of our own narrow histories, oblivious to the concerns of the other. We remain stuck at the point where we want the other side to feel our pain, before we acknowledge their pain. Historians and psychologists should explain to us why this is so.

The Asian Crisis, Part III

Is acquiring a modern economy the prerequisite to democracy?

In this the last of a three-part special series, Gwynne Dyer examines the economic, social, and political implications of the crisis that began in Asia and now threatens to involve the entire world.

"If the first reaction to the economic crisis by many Asian leaders has been denial, the need to attract foreign capital will eventually force a more rational response. That transition may result in a change of leadership in several countries."

— Christopher Wood, Peregrine Securities, Hong Kong

JAKARTA — Typical Western arrogance and free-market triumphalism. What does this Western capitalist understand of the ancient and subtle cultures of Asia? Nothing — and it serves him right that the Peregrine Group has been one of Hong Kong's earliest casualties in the Asian financial panic.

But maybe he's right nevertheless. What if modernisation truly is a package, and nobody gets to cherry-pick only the aspects that appeal to them? If every country that acquires a modern economy is fated to get a modern political system as well, then Asia is heading for democracy. All across the region, there are signs that this may be the outcome.

BANGKOK, NOV. 20, 1997: Chuan Leekpai was so surprised at becoming prime minister on Nov. 8 that he kept forgetting and using opposition facilities instead. He went on driving the car assigned to the opposition leader, and showed up at a meeting room where the opposition parties were plotting strategy against him.

Silly old Chuan. But the point is that the Thais have responded to the crash by dumping the traditional politicians whose power came from buying rural votes wholesale, and who were then compelled to loot the government while in power to refill their coffers for the next election. In place of the robber-baron, they have installed Chuan's Democratic Party, which is Thailand's only modern, broadly based political party.

The "tiger" economies got to where they are now (or rather, where they were three to six months ago) by using authoritarian and essentially pre-modern methods to grow their economies. Cronies and political allies got endless unsecured credits, any little problems that this caused the financial institutions were solved by further injections of government funds, and foreign competition was frozen out by manipulation of the legal system.

It was a system that England's King Henry VIII or France's Cardinal Richelieu would have been quite at home with, and it did the job. The combination of modern production technologies with low wages, an emerging global market, and unlimited funds for investment enabled these countries to achieve truly amazing growth rates. For a while.

Now the party is over, and the disciplines being applied to Asia's emerging

economies by the global markets, or directly by the International Monetary Fund, will put an end to those pre-modern economic relationships. They may put an end to the regimes that built their own power on those relationships as well.

SEOUL, DEC. 24: South Korea's President-elect Kim Dae-jung declares himself "flabbergasted" at the scale of the country's economic crisis. But the real surprise is that this man, long vilified as a Communist by the military regimes who directed the 'Miracle on the Han (River)', and twice the target of state-organised assassination attempts, was elected to clear up the mess they left behind.

South Korea, like Thailand, made the formal transition from military rule to civilian democracy at the end of the 80s, but neither country is yet a fully modern state where politics, the military, the business world and the courts have clearly defined and largely separate spheres of responsibility.

The first countries to democratise, in North America and Western Europe, did so at more or less the same time as they modernised economically.

Now, the crisis is forcing them towards that conclusion.

Will it work the same way in the rest of Asia too? Will countries like Indonesia and even China be pushed towards more democracy, or deeper into tyranny? Analogies are tricky, but they're all we have to work with.

The first countries to democratise, in North America and Western Europe, did so at more or less the same time as they modernised economically. But the economic growth was very slow by contemporary Asian standards, and the political change came in great sudden lurches like the American and French revolutions, so it's hard to establish chains of cause and effect. All you can safely say is that there was some link between economic modernisation and democracy in the West.

In the second great wave of democratisation, in the former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 80s, the relationship seems closer and clearer.

The Stalinist pattern of industrialisation produced 'East Asian' growth rates at first, by simply forcing peasants into the factories and exploiting their cheap labour, but the system's inability to move beyond primitive 'command' relationships resulted in economic stagnation by the 70s. After two decades of frustration, the citizens rebelled — and their tactics were far more sophisticated than the first-wave democratic revolutions because they knew so much more.

The miracle of 1989-1991 was not just that all those Orwellian dictatorships fell. It was that they almost all fell non-violently, and were instantly replaced in most places by more or less functioning democracies. Down in the ethnically tangled, mountainous southern fringes of the old Communist

empire it got quite bloody for a while, and many of the successor states are still struggling economically, but the political transition was astonishingly smooth in the industrialised countries. Why?

Because even Soviet-style industrialisation produced so many urban, literate, modern people, and even the closed Soviet-style economies had so many contacts with the outside world, that it was impossible to close off the information flows.

By the late 80s, in a place like Moscow, everybody knew everything — about how their own country was really run, about the alternatives available in the rest of the world, and about the possible techniques (like non-violent action) for moving from A to B. Then it only took a trigger like the opening of the Berlin Wall for the whole avalanche of democratisation to begin.

In the 'newly industrialising countries' of Asia and elsewhere, industrialisation has produced the same critical mass of urban,

literate people that swept away the old Communist systems in Europe. There is virtually no control over the information flows in these countries except for China, and even there it isn't very effective. Rising prosperity has protected some of the old regimes for a while, but unless Asians are fundamentally different, the same logic ought to apply in the end.

'Asian values' was a crude attempt by the authoritarian regimes to escape this conclusion by arguing that 'Asians' are indeed fundamentally different. But the 'Asian' social and political values preached by Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew or Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad are virtually identical to the values that predominated in the pre-industrial, pre-democratic West.

There is no common 'Asian' culture: Thailand and Burma are Buddhist, Indonesia and Malaysia are Muslim, the Philippines is Christian, the Chinese are ex-Confucian ex-Marxist-Leninists, and the Koreans are deeply confused Confucian/Buddhist/animist/Christians. 'Asian values', to the extent that it ever meant anything, is a slogan in a generational war among Asians, not some profound and ineradicable cultural difference between East and West.

The modern style of non-violent democratic revolution was actually pioneered in Asia, first in the Philippines in 1986, then in Thailand, Bangladesh and South Korea (partial successes) and in Burma and China (bloody failures) in 1987-89, even before it was copied in Communist Europe. This fact largely escaped notice because there was no monolithic political empire in Asia, and therefore no visible 'wave' effect. Until, perhaps, now.

JAKARTA, JAN. 18: Even two months ago, it was taken for granted that

Indonesia's 76-year-old President Suharto would win the March presidential elections and go on to a seventh five-year term. But now, with Indonesia's currency worth only 30 per cent of its August value, many people have little left to lose. "The only way to turn the situation around is to break the status quo," says Amien Rais, chairman of the 20-million-strong Muslim organisation Muhammadiyah. "And the only way to do that is to replace Suharto."

"He should have stepped down a long time ago, we need different people," agreed Abdurrahman Wahid, leader of the Nahdlatul Ulama, which claims a grassroots membership of 30 million Muslims. And Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of the man whom Suharto ousted 32 years ago, has volunteered to run for the presidency herself if nobody else will stand against the 'old man'.

In a daring public speech, the 50-year-old mother of three attacked "the small dynasty of greedy rulers who alone benefit from the great assets of our country" — and the press reported it. Strikes, demonstrations, and even riots are spreading in the great cities of Java, and in private conversations the political elite are debating how to ease Suharto out before March. Even if it means having 'Forrest Gump' (as Vice-President Try Sutrisno is universally known) as the transitional leader.

So can economic crisis bring political reform? There is one recent precedent: three years ago, the Mexican economy hit the buffers just as dramatically as the recent smashes in Thailand or South Korea. The peso halved in value, foreign investment fled, and wages and employment collapsed. An IMF bail-out imposed severe disciplines on the economy, and ordinary Mexicans paid the price.

The macro-economic statistics for Mexico have improved tremendously since then, but real wages are still 23 per cent lower than in 1994, and job losses continued until last year. The economic pain has been intense — yet this is also the period when Mexico finally took decisive steps towards democracy.

Mexico became a one-party state 70 years ago, and though opposition parties have been allowed to operate for the past few decades, they were never allowed to win at the federal level. In last July's elections, however, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) lost its majority in the lower house of Congress.

The PRI machine could have prevented it, but faced with overwhelming public demand for fair elections, it did not. President Ernesto Zedillo has now agreed to work with an opposition-dominated Congress, and PRI could even lose the presidency in three years' time. All this in the midst of, indeed because of the huge economic crisis that has hit the country.

Can we expect the same counter-intuitive outcome in crisis-struck Asian countries that have not yet democratised? Very probably, yes. If the virus spreads to China, we might even see democratisation there.

So all we have to worry about now is a global depression.

Lebanon's private radio and TV under crackdown

By Sultan Sleiman
Reuters

BEIRUT — During Lebanon's civil war, private television and radio stations broadcast propaganda on behalf of militia leaders. Now they are fighting for their existence.

When the guns fell silent in 1990 after 15 years of fighting the stations were transformed into commercial enterprises, a maze of broadcasters competing for audiences with everything from international news to aerobics classes.



Rafik Hariri

But the government remains sensitive to politics — and the public is just as alert to anything smacking of state attempts to muzzle the media.

"Like any other authority in the Arab World, the Lebanese authorities have no interest in an uncontrolled media, that is why it tries to tame it," said Pierre Daher, chairman of Lebanon's leading television Lebanon Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI).

Daher spoke after a new confrontation broke out this month with a government ban on Lebanon's two private satellite television stations broadcasting their own news or political programmes. The two, Future Television owned by Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and LBCI, will be allowed to carry only the state news bulletin.

Daher quoted Hariri defending his decision: "When this media is being used by one political side to bombard another, the second side has the right to retaliate."

The decision, which Daher said will cost his station up to a quarter of its advertising revenue, came three days after LBCI broadcast an interview with Najah Wakim, an opposition member of parliament, in which he attacked various government policies.

Last April, after a complaint by LBCI, Lebanon's highest court ruled that a government decision to censor news broadcasts on satellite was illegal. Daher said the censorship had continued.

Debate on freedom of speech and Hariri's efforts to close unlicensed stations has placed the media at the heart of a debate on freedom of speech. Few deny there was a chaotic broadcast free-for-all after the war, but there are widespread complaints about the crackdown — and especially the motives and methods.

"We have a continuous fear of the government's intentions to pressure the media," said Tarios Deabess, general director of the licensed leftist Voice Of The People Radio. "The government wants only to implement the political side of the law."

Using a 1994 law, the government has licensed only five television stations — three owned by prominent government figures including Hariri. Six radio stations allowed to carry news and political programmes received licences, along with 20 radio stations that can broadcast only entertainment.

An unknown number of unlicensed radio stations, estimated to be about 20, and one unlicensed television station still exist — not counting those beyond Beirut's control in the Israeli-occupied south.

Give Clinton a 'tight iron belt' — Iranian paper

TEHRAN (AP) — Iranian newspapers revelled Monday in the sex scandals surrounding U.S. President Clinton, with one daily recommending he be given the equivalent of a chastity belt, with the key under his wife's control.

On the eve of Mr. Clinton's State of the Union address scheduled Tuesday, the Iran News said that the American president has given new meaning to the word "union."

"All eyes, not only of the American nation but of the world, are focused on the state of the president's past unions," said the English-language paper.

It added: "If he is to lead a whole people, a leader must be moral himself. An adulterous father cannot preach chastity to his children."

The paper also said that a real leader should not waste time and energy on extramarital affairs or have to appear in court answering charges of sexual misconduct.

It suggested that efforts to restore ties between Iran and the United States "can only be after the presentation of a tight iron belt to the president of the United States — with a lock and key for Hillary," Hillary Clinton is the president's wife.

The Farsi-language Akhbar daily wrote about "Monicagate," its name for the scandal that erupted over President Clinton's alleged involvement with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

"Political analysts believe that if Clinton doesn't have any convincing answers, Monicagate is a crisis that could plunge him into a fate similar to that of the Republican president, Richard Nixon," the paper said. Nixon was forced to resign over the Watergate scandal.

The Tehran Times on Sunday said Mr. Clinton was "losing credibility both at home and abroad" because of the scandals.

"Bombshell charges, being levelled against the top administrative authority in the United States have tarnished the image of a president in a country that claims to be a superpower," the English-language paper said.

The Farsi-language Qods daily said the scandal could be a calculated move by those who sought to agitate Mr. Clinton at a time when he should be making important decisions.

Court rules temporary press law is unconstitutional, orders it nullified

(Continued from page 1)

of weeklies from JD 15,000 in the previous law to JD 300,000, a sum which was impossible to secure by most of the weeklies.

The law also raised the penalties on violators. While fines in the previous law did not exceed JD1,000, the temporary law set minimum fines at JD 15,000 and maximum fines at JD50,000. According to the law, violations include any published news, analysis, commentaries or cartoons that infringe on the Royal family, national unity, general ethics, religion, security apparatus, and heads of Arab and friendly countries.

The amendments, ratified by a Royal Decree and introduced two months after Parliament went into recess, also allow the government to keep its shares in daily newspapers, and increase the number of content-based restrictions on publications.

The government in the temporary law gave a three months grace period for the newspapers to rectify their situation and increase their capital. All newspapers which failed to meet the set requirements were ordered suspended.

Abed Rabbho, the only satirical weekly in Jordan and probably in the Arab World, was the first to disappear because of what the publishers said at the time was the "lack of press freedoms."

It was followed by Al Majd that reappeared last month after it secured the JD 300,000. As Sayyid, Al Hayat, Al Bilad, Sawt Al Mara'a, Al Umma, Al Hadath, Hawadeth As-Sa'ah, Al Mithaq, Al Urdun, Tareeq Al Mustaqbal, Al Najm Al Arabi and Fares were all suspended by the government.

Not only that, but the amendments, which also imposed a ten-year minimum experience for chief editors of newspapers, have influenced prominent writer Nahil Sharif, the chief editor of the second leading daily, Ad Dustour. Although Dr. Sharif continued to hold the post of chief editor, it was Mahmoud Sharif who replaced him as "the responsible chief editor" after the government threatened to apply the law. (See story below).

A joint statement issued at the time by London-based organisation for press freedoms, Article 19, and the New York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) criticised the amendments and said that "the new amendments ratified without public or parlia-

mentary debate, impose sweeping restrictions on the press, giving the state broad powers to suspend, fine and permanently close newspapers found to be in violation of the many vaguely-worded provisions of the law. The amendments violate the right of journalists to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Jordan is a party."

Last July, five weeklies, Al Hadath, Al Majd, As Sabeeh, Al Bilad and Sawt Mara'a, filed a case against the government charging that the temporary law was unconstitutional. A second lawsuit was launched by the same newspapers in addition to As Sayyid, Al Umma and Hawadeth As-Sa'ah in September contesting the government's suspension decision.

Unless the government imposes a new law, the court ruling is expected to contribute to the enhancement of press freedoms which have been largely limited and reduced since the imposition of the amendments.

"This is a good day for democracy," said Ibrahim Izzedine, former minister of information and director of the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation. "The ruling is a message as well. The executive authority should not be allowed to have the upper hand in the press; it is the judiciary that should be the arbiter in all cases."

"As a journalist, I am delighted to witness this day, which assures me that democracy is on the right track," Dr. Nahil Sharif told the Jordan Times. "I look forward to the government's decision to withdraw the law completely and to work together with the press association to introduce a law that would continue to improve press freedoms."

Musa Kilani, editor of the suspended Al Urdun weekly hailed the decision as a move that "restores to the legal system its image of honesty, objectivity and rejection of political pressures by the executive authorities."

"This decision has to be applauded by all concerned who should stand by the High Court in its fair judicial deliberations which annulled the temporary press law. I hope the same criteria will be applied regarding all other temporary laws especially the election law," he said.

King meets Israeli defence minister, stresses need to implement accords

(Continued from page 1)

in Cairo on Sunday, and efforts by Mr. Arafat to drum up support for an emergency Arab League summit to discuss the deadlocked peace process.

The resignation of moderate Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy from Mr. Netanyahu's hard-line government on Jan. 4, over budget allocations and stalled peace efforts, and the defection of his Geshet Party, has

increased apprehension in Jordan that implementation of the Oslo accords will be further delayed.

Mr. Mordechai, who has been pushing for progress with the Palestinians and the Syrians, is considered to be the only remaining moderate in the Israeli government. On Jan. 7, he announced that he would resign from the government if a further pullback from the West Bank was not carried out.

A number of Israeli officials in Amman in the past three weeks, including Labour opposition party leader Ehud Barak, Speaker of Knesset Dan Tichon, and a Shas Party delegation.

Israel's botched assassination attempt on Hamas leader Khaled Misha'al in Amman last September dealt a heavy blow to Jordan's three year-old peace treaty with the Jewish state.

between King Hussein and the Israeli premier since, took place in London in November.

King Hussein has blamed Mr. Netanyahu for the deadlock in the peace process. However, he has maintained extensive contact with other Israeli officials, and parliamentarians.

Yesterday the King hosted an iftar for over 200 Israeli Arabs.

Alternative to peace more deaths, destruction, devastation — King

(Continued from page 1)

of the Arabs in Israel.

"Our duty is to challenge these forces at this stage and belittle them. Nobody will hamper us from reaching our goal to achieve a just, comprehensive and honest peace. And we shall challenge all attempts by such forces that try to tamper with this issue," the King added.

"He, whose sole desire is a temporary achievement, will never realise his responsibility towards the present and future whether he is an Arab or an Israeli," the King said.

The King warned that more weapons of mass destruction, widely believed to be in the possession of Israel, will threaten peace, stability and progress in the region.

"Mass destruction weapons will not differentiate between a soldier and a civilian, between a human being and another man or woman... is this the future we are yearning for?" the King asked.

He added that the land for peace formula is the only way to achieve the just peace which would enable the Palestinians to establish their state with their capital "in Jerusalem."

The King emphasised that the comprehensive peace should include an Israeli pullout from the occupied Syrian and Lebanese territories.

The Arab Israeli delegation arrived in Jordan earlier in the day at the King's invitation. Though Jordan's Parliament has steered clear of normalising ties with the Knesset after the Kingdom and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994, several Jordanian deputies and senators attended the banquet including the speaker of the Upper and Lower Houses.

"The invitation was part of His Majesty's desire to maintain good ties with all political parties and independent personalities in Israel," said Jordanian Lower House of Parlia-

ment Deputy Hamadeh Fara'aneh.

"It is part of Jordan's keenness to win the support of Arab and Israeli political groups for the peace process and for Arab rights in general," he told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Fara'aneh, who maintains regular contacts with Arab Israeli deputies and politicians, was involved in the trip's preparations.

Mr. Fara'aneh and Islamist Deputy Mohammad Ra'afat enraged Parliament, newspapers, political activists and their constituencies met in December with Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon and other officials.

Deputies condemned the surprise trip to Israel.

The team, headed by Ibrahim Nimer Darwish, mayor of the village of Shafa Amr in northern Galilee, includes over 10 Arab Israeli parliamentarians representing different Israeli political parties such as Labour, Meretz, the Democratic Front for

Equality and Progress, the Arab Democratic Party and the Islamic Movement.

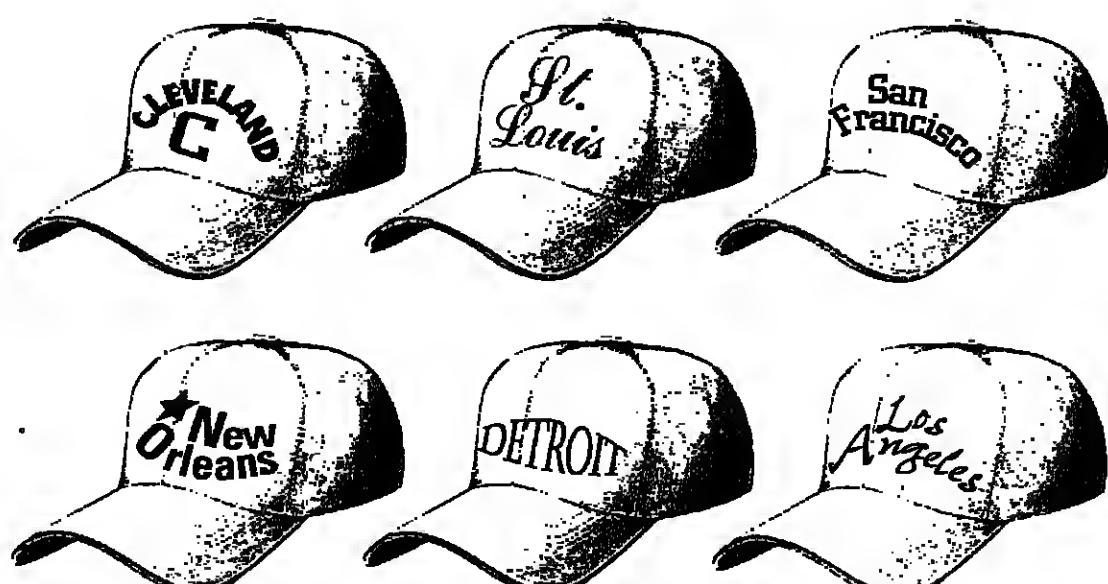
Some of the visiting Knesset members are: Hashim Mahamid, Talab Sana', Abdul Malik Dahamsheh, Salih Tarif, Saleh Salim, Ahmad Sa'ad, Azmi Bsharah and Abdul Wahab Darawsheh.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's advisor for Israeli affairs, Ahmad Tibi, also attended the meeting.

This meeting is the latest in a string of meetings with Israeli deputies and leaders of political parties hosted by the King in the last several weeks.

Mr. Tichon, Rabbi Aryeh Dert, head of the religious Israeli Shas Party — a coalition partner in the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — and Labour Party leader Ehud Barak have made separate visits to Amman.

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Correction

IN THE text of the interview with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, part of a question was erroneously placed at the beginning of Dr. Majali's response to same. The question regarding Jordan's relations with Iraq and Syria should have included the following: "Iraqi authorities opted to release the Jordanian prisoners to Laith Shubellat, ignoring Jordan's appeals to do so at the highest levels. The Syrian media has harshly attacked Jordan for participating as an observer in naval exercises with Israel and Turkey."

Industrialists see decision to set up chamber of industry in Zarqa as harmful to Jordan economy

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Several Jordanian industrialists said Monday they were enraged by a recent government decision to authorise the establishment of an independent chamber of industry in Zarqa.

The move dealt a severe blow to the Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) — for decades the sole powerful representative of Jordanian industrialists.

"This will not help in safeguarding the inter-

ests of Jordanian industrialists," ACI Deputy President Wasif Azar told the Jordan Times.

Twenty-three industrialists in the governorates of Zarqa and Mafrqa asked Trade Minister Hani Mulki several months ago to set up two separate chambers to avoid what they said was "power centralisation in ACI hands."

The decision was issued this month.

Dr. Mulki told the Jordan Times in December that the current law governing the chambers of

industry and trade in Jordan allowed the business community to establish separate chambers in different parts of the Kingdom.

The Zarqa Chamber of Industry will elect a seven-member board of directors in mid-February, he added. It was not clear if Dr. Mulki authorised the creation of a chamber of industry in Mafrqa.

Official sources have dismissed claims by some industrialists that Dr. Mulki was trying to score points with ACI Chairman Khalidoun

Abu Hassan because of personal differences over economic policies.

Pro-ACI industrialists said the move would harm Jordan's economy at a time when the private sector should join forces to confront challenges posed by economic globalisation.

"This is an obvious approach to disintegrate the Jordanian industry when Jordan has signed an association agreement with the European Union (EU) and is in the process of joining the World Trade Organisation," said one industri-

alist who requested anonymity.

Jordan and the EU signed an association agreement in November with the aim of creating a free zone area by the year 2010.

ACI sources stressed the importance of having an experienced ACI economic team in charge of dealing with recent economic developments, especially that the private sector was suffering from business recession.

"The production capacity has gone down by 50 per cent. and,

according to the Centre of Strategic Studies, unemployment rates have reached 27 per cent," said one ACI source.

However, others defended the establishment of industrial chambers in Zarqa and Mafrqa on grounds they were against concentrating the Jordanian industry in one area.

The ACI general assembly is expected to hold a meeting on Sunday to discuss the issue and "try to safeguard the unity and the base of the Jordanian industry."

Indonesia economy stumbles as turmoil widens

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia's economy is grinding to a halt because of currency, liquidity and debt turmoil but the full impact of the crisis will not be felt until next month, businessmen and economic analysts have said.

Almost all listed companies in the country are now technically bankrupt, they said, speaking to the reporters after the rupiah fell as low as 17,000 to the dollar — down 65 per cent from the start of the year and 86 per cent since July.

These are the firms which have outstanding dollar loans — which form a big majority of the country's corporate sector — but even those with low debt are in deep trouble. "At this level, if anything a company produces has even a bit of imported content, it is finished," said an executive at a textile firm. "We are talking about factories closing down and lay-offs."

He said letters of credit drawn on local banks were not being accepted by foreign parties, who were demanding they be guaranteed by foreign banks.

Foreign currency was already at extremely high levels but even rupiah was hard to come by for local firms because of a squeeze on liquidity, he said.

One analyst said a major steel plant was unable to guarantee supplies beyond February because of its imported content and automobile firms were suffering.

An official at the country's largest automobile manufacturer, Astra International ASILJK, said production had been slowed down because of the crisis but he had not

heard of any problems from suppliers.

Indonesia has forecast 20 per cent inflation and zero economic growth in the year starting April 1, figures which imply bruising times ahead for companies.

Tom Soutsbj, head of research for ANZ Securities, said the economy was likely to shrink and a 10 per cent contraction was not out of the question.

But he said some companies would ride out the crisis. "What you want to be looking at is companies with externally-oriented sales with minimum import content," Mr. Soutsbj said.

"That's why the agri-business sectors and mining sectors are becoming predominant in terms of market capitalisation in the market."

But analysts and businessmen said the full impact of the crisis in Muslim-majority Indonesia was not visible yet because of the annual slowdown in production during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Ramadan ends with the 'Eid Al Fitr festival on Jan. 30-31.

"Most workers are on holiday already," said the textile executive. "I think when they return next month, many of them will find their factory gates locked."

Sutikno, a spokesman for the manpower ministry, told that some one million people were likely to be laid off this year, adding to 2.7 million already unemployed.

But those represent workers only in the organised sectors.

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 26/01/1998											
FAST 12 MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
HIGH	LOW										
346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	15.2	1.21	23	700	231240	230.00	230.00	-	
2.340	1.480	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	0.00	0.00	5	2950	5281	1.79	1.79	-	
3.540	1.420	BANK OF JORDAN	0.00	0.00	1	100	154	1.62	1.54	-0.08	
1.200	0.890	NID. EAST INV. BK.	65.7	0.00	1	500	300	1.04	1.00	-0.04	
2.480	1.450	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.2	0.14	10	12400	21182	1.70	1.70	-	
5.200	4.610	THE HOUSING BK.	19.4	3.77	3	1100	3445	5.13	5.13	-	
1.970	0.620	JOR. GULF BANK	3.9	10.81	1	100	66	0.66	0.66	-	
4.090	2.250	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.2	4.02	2	2650	6209	2.38	2.39	0.01	
2.350	2.070	JOR. INV. FID. BANK/NEW	0.00	0.00	4	1984	3908	2.07	1.93	-0.10	
1.620	0.870	BETT. AL-HAL (BETRA)	0.00	14.83	2	600	534	0.90	0.89	-0.01	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 222.83 CHG: -0.11											
2.120	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSH.	5.6	7.35	1	100	204	2.12	2.04	-0.08	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 120.79 CHG: -0.39											
2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.18	1	500	955	1.94	1.93	-0.01	
8.900	7.900	JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	11.9	1.12	1	200	1658	8.48	8.29	-0.19	
1.550	0.910	NATL. PORTFOLIO	0.00	0.00	16	5255	5512	1.06	1.04	-0.02	
4.700	8.700	ARAB FID. INVEST.	14.1	4.59	32	33950	14782	4.32	4.36	0.04	
6.000	4.400	DAR AL-ADWA IN. INV.	24.1	4.35	8	17611	101352	5.80	5.75	-0.05	
3.600	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.6	10.48	10	15000	36025	2.40	2.39	-0.01	
0.630	0.340	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.5	0.00	2	600	270	0.45	0.45	-	
0.680	0.310	NATL. CHEMIST.	0.00	0.00	7	3637	2322	0.59	0.59	-	
3.000	1.040	NATL. CABLE WIRE. NYAC	24.6	0.00	19	5050	5233	1.04	1.02	-0.02	
1.610	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.8	5.74	5	2750	2135	1.25	1.22	-0.03	
1.800	0.820	UNIV. MOON. IND.	0.00	0.00	30	18700	15895	0.85	0.85	-	
1.820	1.350	NATL. CHEMIST.	14.1	4.57	4	850	1238	1.45	1.50	0.05	
0.960	0.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.3	0.00	1	1000	900	0.90	0.90	-	
3.970	1.340	EL-SAY READY WEAR	47.5	0.00	2	1000	1350	1.38	1.35	-0.03	
1.280	1.060	INTL. TORACOS	5.6	0.00	10	80000	96500	1.21	1.21	-	
1.200	0.960	UNION CH. & YES.	44.6	0.00	1	2000	1960	1.00	0.98	-0.02	
0.810	0.700	JORDAN STEEL	31.7	7.14	11	8550	5985	0.70	0.70	-	
0.840	0.570	NID. EAST COMPLEX	7.5	16.29	3	1000	608	0.62	0.61	-0.01	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 110.36 CHG: -0.04											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 167.06 CHG: -0.10											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 26/01/1998											
R 1.050	3.030	EXPORT & FIN. BNC. 75%	0.00	0.00	1	400	320	1.03	1.05	0.02	
0.610	0.340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.9	0.00	33	10150	3664	0.38	0.37	-0.01	
0.800	0.660	UNION INV. 50%	0.00	0.00	5	3025	607	0.71	0.70	-0.01	
0.700	0.440	ARAB FID. INVEST.	0.00	0.00	37	11200	5755	0.51	0.52	0.01	
0.780	0.610	AL-DAMIRI 75%	67.2	0.00	6	3850	1733	0.70	0.70	-	
1.000	1.000	SPECIALIZED JOR. 75%	0.00	0.00	1	250	200	3.00	2.05	-0.95	
1.000	0.850	ARAB INV. CO.	0.00	0.00	1	250	210	0.85	0.88	0.03	
0.900	0.270	ARAB INTL. INV. LTD.	32.2	0.00	3	2000	560	0.28	0.28	-	
0.750	0.380	NATL. MULT. ENG. NAMCO	0.00	0.00	15	19750	9283	0.48	0.47	-0.01	
0.520	0.400	ARAB ELECT. IND.	0.00	0.00	1	250	123	0.48	0.49	0.01	
0.470	0.380	HIDRAT PHARM. 90%	0.00	0.00	2	600	310	0.67	0.55	-0.12	
0.730	0.550	RAZI PHARM.	0.00	0.00	3	7250	5148	0.71	0.71	-	
0.470	0.240	INDOS. ENG.	0.00	0.00	2	26250	742	0.28	0.28	-	
0.950	0.570	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	0.00	0.00	13	5782	3866	0.57	0.58	0.01	
0.820	0.490	NATL. POLYTECH	0.00	0.00	7	3800	1986	0.52	0.53	0.01	
1.000	0.640	ARAB ALUMINIUM. 75%	93.2	0.00	4	2000	840	0.87	0.67	-0.20	
1.310	1.000	MUTRAN	0.00	0.00	10	3773	4359	1.17	1.15	-0.02	
GRAND TOTAL 104 77973 39753											

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

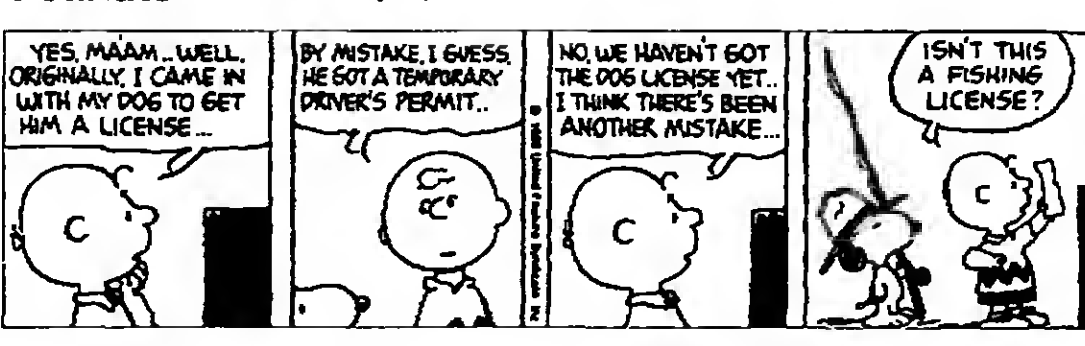
ACROSS

- Compare prices
- Shack it out
- Pac nations' pact
- Arizona Indians
- Ireland
- Whippersnappers
- Actor Baldwin
- Fleety bug
- Florida city
- Wake-up location of song
- Winter Whiesel
- Always, in poems
- Entanglement
- Pelt
- Nerds
- Colorful houseplants
- Inter-campus sports grp.
- Couch
- Paragonian
- Bochco show
- Cable network
- Let up
- Midwest
- Singer Home
- Operatic voice
- Wiggy
- Maghe of baseball
- Tween character
- Where Feds found his thrill
- Navigation system
- Environ
- Singer Brackell
- Man in the field
- Pearly cry
- Galeatic time period
- Typefaces
- Makes a lawn
- Duryea and Rather

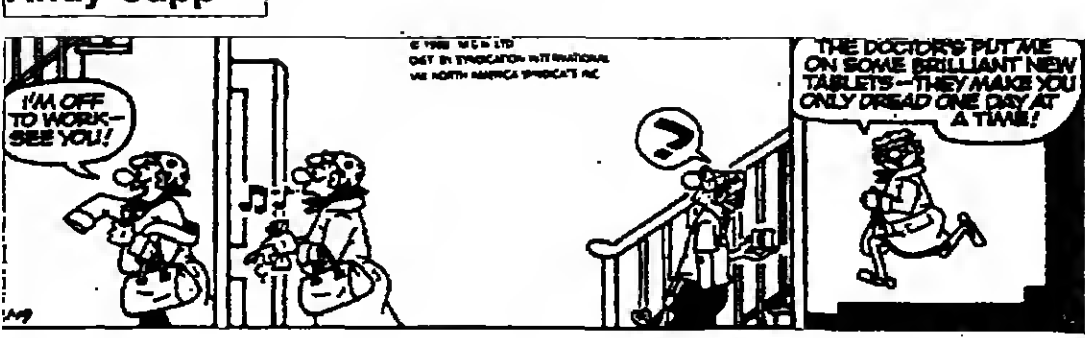
DOWN

- Deceptive appearance
- Gram starter?
- Fuel cartel, briefly
- Freshwater fish
- Musical signs
- Slight traces
- Part
- Well-grounded
- Rights of a monastery's leader
- N. Mandela's nation
- Dodo
- Part of U.A.E.
- Abominable snowman
- Joseph's porcelain
- 32-card game
- Jai
- Archer of note
- Evangelist Roberts
- Treat body
- Soprano
- Synagogue
- Static
- Comic Sherman
- Housemaid's scaly joints
- Cool down
- Devil's man
- Elders and
- Obliquely
- Crafty
- Bee and Em, e.g.
- Russian mountain range
- Scandinavian saint
- Astronaut's negative
- British gun
- Bengal and Balcay
- Last of switch?
- Notion
- Big cat
- Eye element

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Your friends are going to play a major role in your life. If you're interested in a new job, you'll probably find it through them. If there's an activity you care about, you'll be able to address it more effectively with a group. By the way, it's an excellent day for transformation. You'll do that with the help of your friends, too.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Your focus is on business. Today or tomorrow, you'll be tested to see if you're ready for the next level. Prepare now. You'll know the nature of your test if you pay close attention to the boss. He or she will be pretty much making the same request over and over all day long.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — If you could start your world cruise today, you'd be assured of success. At least start planning. A foreigner would be the perfect partner for this enterprise. You might even save money by staying at this person's house. That will only work, of course, if you're the best of friends. Get started on that project immediately.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) — This is a good day to research a purchasing decision and learn how to do accounting on the computer. Most Cancers are more people-oriented than technically inclined. That's fine, once you know the ropes. But first you have to get past that awkward learning phase. Get a compassionate expert to teach you.

LEO (July 23-August 22) — You and a partner need to have a conference today. This may be a one-sided discussion, with your partner doing the talking. Trouble is, he or she has some good ideas. You have to let somebody else run the show like this, but do that today anyway. Besides, if this scheme doesn't work, it won't be your fault.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22) — Your job demands your full attention. You should be rested by now, so get in there and give it your best shot. Things are going to be coming out different than you expected all day long. There is a procedure to follow to make things the way you want. Your challenge today is to find out what the procedure is and memorize it.

LIBRA (September 23-October 23) — This is a marvellous time for decisions regarding romance, children or games of chance. You're lucky today, especially if your decision involves people you love. You've been pushed in this direction for several days. Well, it's about time to make up your mind. You don't have to do it quite yet, however. Tomorrow's even better.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 21) — There's a lot of emphasis on your home. Usually that means there's a renovation project going on. In your case, it could mean actually moving into a new home. If so, you'll be in a very stable environment after this happens. In other words, if you are moving now, you'll settle in and stay for a long time. Sounds like fun.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21) — You're intelligent, but sometimes you're more interested in athletics than academia. Your general reaction to a tough subject is to go play sports for a few hours. But today is different. In fact this might be the time to launch a whole new educational programme. Call up a junior college and see what they have to offer.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19) — You're thinking about money, asking about it, counting it. Tonight, you might come up with an excellent idea about how to make more of it. Surround yourself with people who like to talk about money. It's worth the price of dinner. You'll get excellent support.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18) — Here's your reward for having been such a good person yesterday. You have boundless energy. Your imagination is incredible. Your ability to solve problems is gaining fame far and wide. You might even come up with something today that will help you make history.

PISCES (February 19-March 20) — There's pressure on you to finish up old projects. You're also putting your hopes and dreams into blueprint form. You're getting realistic about a few things, so you can get unrealistic again later. Right now, and especially today, you need to get practical. Start making lists.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

THE BETTER HALF, By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NAPOC

VENET

REVORF

WILEBA

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: TITLE BEFIT SCORCH TUSSEL

Answer: What the dedicated photographer gave the newsways — HIS BEST SHOT

Daily Business Deal

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan earned \$760 million from tourism last year — Abu Ayyash

THE NUMBER of tourists visiting Jordan increased by three per cent last year, or about 300,000 visitors more than the 1996 figure, Abdul Elah Abu Ayyash, the advisor to the minister of tourism has said. He pointed out that the average stay of a tourist rose from 3.5 nights in 1996 to 3.9 nights in 1997 and that tourists groups spent around 50,000 additional nights in the Kingdom.

Dr. Abu Ayyash indicated that Gulf tourism registered a good rate, reaching about six per cent in 1997 over the 1996, and that earnings from tourism increased from \$740 million in 1996 to \$760 million in 1997. The earnings represent around 35 per cent of the overall export income of the country, he pointed out. He added that earnings collected at touristic sites went up from JD7.3 million in 1996 to JD7.6 million during last year.

"Tourism account for 10.5 per cent of Jordan's gross domestic product and provides about 20,000 direct employment opportunities and 30,000 indirect ones," said Dr. Abu Ayyash who was lecturing at a seminar about Arab tourism integration at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman this week. In providing latest statistics, the advisor said that the number of hotels and hotel suites rose from 161 in 1996 to 175 in 1997. He added that the number of rooms exceed 10,000 and that the number of beds is around 19,000.

Dr. Abu Ayyash said that 35 hotel and tourism projects, carrying an investment volume of around JD125 million, have benefited from the Investment Promotion Law for the year 1997.

"To support and develop the tourism sector over the coming few years, six important tourism projects will be implemented in downtown Amman, Salt, Karak and the Dead Sea area. The work in downtown Amman will include setting up a modern tourist bus terminal along with markets and other services in addition to a "touristic street". A national museum will also be established at the Ras Al Ein area. Dr. Abu Ayyash said noting that 34 projects involving JD125 million of investment were carried out last year.

Dr. Abu Ayyash concluded by mentioning that the strategy of the Ministry of Tourism to develop the tourism sector in the Kingdom is estimated to cost JD56 million. He indicated that design work has started and it will be completed after seven months at the latest. "The actual implementation work will begin by early 1999," the advisor said (Al Ra'i).

Asian crisis hits oil price, leaving OPEC reeling

VIENNA (AP) — The price of oil has tumbled to its lowest level in nearly four years, and the OPEC ministers who pushed themselves into the mess are confused and divided as they try to bounce back.

Several ministers have called an emergency meeting Monday to deal with the crisis — which of course is a windfall for oil consumers — but their timing and strategy may be off, analysts say.

The biggest player, Saudi Oil Minister Ali Naimi, won't attend, so the handful of ministers who do show up will be stuck in a position where they can make recommendations but not do anything about too much production.

A lot of noise with no action could further weaken the market, which has been hit hard by the Asian economic crisis and a generally mild winter in the United States and Europe. It's impossible to forecast the markets, but traders might well be further spooked if OPEC complains about its own overproduction but doesn't even make any moves to stop it, analysts say.

Other experts believe things aren't likely to get much worse in the short term.

"The damage is already done," said Geoff Pym, who follows oil for UBS Ltd. in London. "It's hard to see how they can do worse, I don't see that they can do a lot of damage unless they're silly enough to try to raise expectations of a production cut."

The Saudis have a good reason to stay away from any talk about cutbacks. Mr. Naimi was the minister who pushed the divisive plan at the last OPEC meeting in November to raise the stated output ceiling by 10 per cent, and oil prices have dropped by around \$4 per barrel since then.

OPEC was getting more than \$18 per barrel before — compared to its official target of \$21 — but saw prices plunge to a little more than \$14 last week.

This creates a dilemma that will have the OPEC nations missing national budget targets, but any kind of reversal in policy would mean a big loss of face for the Saudis, the world's top oil producer.

Unfortunately for oil consumers in developed Western nations, retail fuel prices have not dropped so much because taxes make up a big part of the bill.

Analysts say the most likely solution for OPEC might be a quiet — maybe totally silent — unilateral decision by the Saudis to pump less.

"They'd be embarrassed to do something openly, as opposed to just cuning back in a quiet way," said Leo Drollas, chief economist at the Centre for Global Energy Studies in London. The Saudis produce about one-third of OPEC's oil and have the greatest ability to lower — or raise — output.

The ministers from Iran, Nigeria and Kuwait who have planned the emergency meeting, one month

Consumer Protection Society blasts government for hiking prices of oil products, gas cylinders

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Consumer Protection Society (CPS) Monday issued a communique denouncing the increase in the prices of oil products and gas cylinders and describing the government's decision as a gift to the people on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr, the feast marking the end of Ramadan.

"Raising the prices of gasoline and gas cylinders from Feb. 1 was at the expense of the consumers. Ordinary citizens will be severely affected by this measure," said the communique.

CPS sources said: "We expected the prices of oil products and gas cylinders to decrease after Jordan signed an oil agreement with Iraq few weeks ago giving the Kingdom half of its oil needs for free."

The communique found the government's measure as strange and said it should have rather discussed the impact of floating prices on the citizen's purchase power without referring to imposing more taxes and fees as well as raising prices.

As such, the CPS "considers the government's decision to hike prices of oil products and gas cylinders as unjustifiable," said Mohammad Obeidat, president of the CPS.

"We were stunned by the news that the government has decided to increase the prices of oil products and gas cylinders," Dr. Obeidat said. "These owners and distributors asked the government to lower its margin of profit and to increase their commission without increasing prices at the expense of consumers," he added.

He earlier said that the cost of living in Jordan grew by eight per cent last year following the government's decision to float the prices of various basic commodities.

"The floating of prices has benefited merchants in an uncontrollable manner," said Dr. Obeidat.

A recent study conducted by the society indicates that unemployment has increased to 37 per cent and that more than 50 per cent of the citizens are living under the poverty line.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
	USD	GBP	JPY	DEM	CHF	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6933	1.0610	1.3663	1.6333	6.5596	1.9364	163.33	340.75
DE Mark	0.6933	1.0000	1.3663	1.0000	0.6333	2.4836	0.7936	6.5596	163.33
GB Sterling	1.4503	1.4503	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048
CH Franc	0.6078	0.6078	0.6078	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
JP Yen	0.0074	0.0074	1.0000	0.7296	0.7296	0.7296	0.7296	0.7296	0.7296
CA Dollar	0.6933	0.6933	0.6933	0.6933	0.6933	0.6933	0.6933	0.6933	0.6933
IT Lira	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
NL Guilder	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
FR Franc	0.1670	0.2364	0.1067	0.2408	0.1000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
	USD	GBP	JPY	DEM	CHF	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6933	1.0610	1.3663	1.6333	6.5596	1.9364	163.33	340.75
Jordan Dinar	1.4503	1.4503	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1850	0.2834	0.3806	0.4594	1.8750	0.5834	4.7564	9.6363
Bahrain Dinar	2.48	1.72	2.32	3.08	3.69	14.96	4.58	36.96	74.63
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.1947	0.2601	0.3468	0.4281	1.7125	0.5281	4.2811	8.6363
Kuwait Dinar	3.2566	2.3222	2.5372	3.3806	4.0944	16.3750	4.9834	39.6363	79.6363
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1938	0.2612	0.3454	0.4267	1.7062	0.5267	4.2671	8.6363
Lebanese L1000	0.88	0.62	0.83	1.09	1.31	5.25	1.58	12.50	25.25
Egyptian	0.2543	0.1807	0.2410	0.3177	0.3898	1.5594	0.4743	3.7434	7.4863

Energy									
	USD	GBP	JPY	DEM	CHF	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
Brent	14.78	10.24	13.64	18.10	21.94	87.50	26.64	213.33	426.67
WTI	14.78	10.24	13.64	18.10	21.94	87.50	26.64	213.33	426.67
Dubai	12.82	8.98	11.64	15.50	18.75	75.00	23.14	183.33	366.67
U.S. Gas	195.00	135.00	175.00	230.00	280.00	1100.00	330.00	2633.33	5266.67

Metal Prices									
	USD	GBP	JPY	DEM	CHF	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
Gold (oz's)	302.25	212.75	282.75	372.75	452.75	1792.50	542.75	4322.50	8645.00
Silver (oz's)	5.36	3.86	5.06	6.66	8.16	31.66	9.66	76.66	153.33
Platinum (oz's)	354	254	334	434	534	2064	624	4944	9888
AL (3 Months)	1627	1127	1487	1967	2447	9487	2847	22477	44954
CU (3 Months)	1796	1296	1706	2226	2746	10586	3186	25366	50732
Zinc (3 Months)	1196	846	1106	1456	1806	6986	2106	16566	33132
Lead (3 Months)	826	576	746	976	1206	4686	1406	11066	22132
Ni (3 Months)	6050	4350	5650	7350	9050	34850	10550	83550	167100

Main Equity Indices									
	Index	Value	Change	% Change	High	Low	Open	Prev. Close	Vol.
New York	DOW JONES	7763.66	62.81	0.81	7767.78	7761.73	7760.74	7760.74	1100.00
New York	S&P 500	962.4	4.91	0.5	963.94	960.99	961.99	961.99	1100.00
London	FT-SE 100	5238.1	67.7	1.3	5241.8	5234.4	5234.4	5234.4	1100.00
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	17073.33	284.22	1.68	17153	16988.2	16988.2	16988.2	1100.00
Paris	CAC 40	3004.47	34.32	1.16	3004.83	2969.1	2969.1	2969.1	1100.00
Frankfurt	DAX	4234.78	12.83	0.3	4237.4	4218.81	4218.81	4218.81	1100.00

JOD Cross Rates									
	USD	GBP	JPY	DEM	CHF	FRF	ITL	ESP	GRD
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6933	1.0610	1.3663	1.6333	6.5596	1.9364	163.33	340.75
GB Sterling	0.6933	1.0000	1.3663	1.0000	0.6333	2.4836	0.7936	6.5596	163.33
DE Mark	1.4503	1.4503	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048	2.0048
CH Franc	0.6078	0.6078	0.6078	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
JP Yen	0.0074	0.0074	1.0000	0.7296	0.7296	0.7296	0.7296	0.7296	0.7296
FR Franc	0.1670	0.2364	0.1067	0.2408	0.1000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
NL Guilder	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
IT Lira	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Egyptian airlines facing bankruptcy

CAIRO (AFP) — Private Egyptian airlines are facing bankruptcy as tourists who meant their bread and butter continue to steer away from Egypt in the aftermath of the Luxor massacre, the head of one of the companies has said.

"The only means to save these airlines from bankruptcy is to authorize them to fly domestic routes and fly to the Gulf," Sayed Saber, president of the private airline AMC, told a press conference.

AMC, like the other four private airlines licensed in May, is specialised in charter flights between Europe and Luxor, the south Egypt resort where 58 holidaymakers and four Egyptians were massacred by militants on Nov. 17. The airline also takes charter tours from Europe to the Red Sea resort of Hurghada.

Buoyed by the prospects of a boom year for tourism in Egypt before the massacre, AMC bought four new planes from McDonnell Douglas and has five years to pay its debts.

"All together I have a 757-seat availability but I only fly once a week charters from Verona (Italy) and Hurghada," Mr. Saber said.


Egypt had hoped to host more than four million tourists, but the Luxor massacre badly damaged the lucrative tourist industry, which is expected to lose \$1 billion.

The Egyptian transport ministry issued licences to five passenger and cargo airlines companies in May, ending the 65-year monopoly of the state carrier EgyptAir.

But EgyptAir continues to be the only carrier authorised to make domestic flights or to fly to the Arab Gulf countries.

"We would like to be able to obtain only one per cent of domestic flights and Gulf flights, particularly since the next few months will be high season for (Muslim) pilgrims going to the holy sites (in Saudi Arabia)," Mr. Saber said.

EgyptAir is expected to fly 65,000 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia over the next few months.

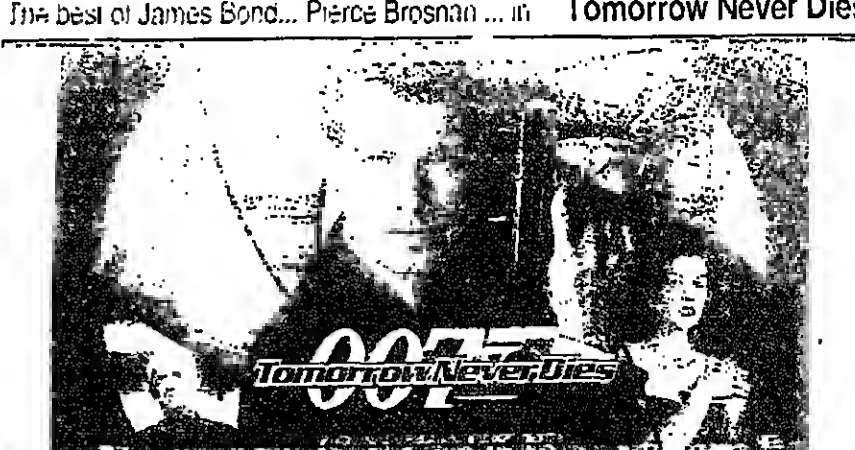


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THE GODFATHER PART II




Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15

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Hingis wins in 38 minutes; Pierce, Rios, Martinez advance Huber downs Coetzer to meet Sanchez

MELBOURNE (AP) — For the first time in this Australian Open, women's defending champion Martina Hingis wasn't put on centre court. She would not have used it long anyway.

After a three-hour rain delay, Hingis needed only 38 minutes today to advance to the quarterfinals with a 6-0, 6-0 drubbing of Indonesia's Yayuk Basuki on court 1, a stadium that seats 6,000.

A few hours later on centre court, No. 5 Mary Pierce upstaged her by posting her second 6-0, 6-0 of the tournament. She needed 46 minutes, however, to beat Slovakia's Henrieta Nagyova — and advance to a quarterfinal with Hingis.

It was the third 6-0, 6-0 result in the women's round of 16 here, No. 2 Lindsay Davenport had done it against No. 15 Ruxandra Dragomir on Friday.

Pierce also had done it in the first round and No. 7 Arantxa Sanchez Vicario did it in the third. All those earlier shutouts took more than 40 minutes.

Hingis beat Pierce in the final of last year's Australian Open, starting a year in



Chile's Marcelo Rios plays a backhand against France's Lionel Roux during their fourth round match at the Australian Open in Melbourne January 26. Rios advanced to the quarter finals with his 6-2 4-6 6-2 6-4 win (Reuters photo)

Nicolas Escude, a former junior star starting to find his way in the big time, beat Wimbledon semi-finalist Todd Woodbridge and became the first Frenchman in five years to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals.

Escude, who climbed from the 400s to a ranking of 79th last year, erased an early lead by the Australian and won 7-6 (7-4), 6-3, 6-2 in a match played under a closed roof on centre court because of the rain. He now will meet another former junior star, Germany's Nicolas Kiefer.

Kiefer, who was the No. 2-ranked junior in the world in 1993, eliminated France's Guillaume Raoux 6-3, 6-4, 7-5.

Escude was ranked as low as no. 415 last February, and his best previous Grand Slam result was reaching the third round of last year's

which she rose to the No. 1 ranking, won three of the grand slams and was runner-up in the other.

In their most recent match, however, Pierce beat Hingis in the quarterfinals of the 1997 season-ending Chase Championships.

Pierce noted that the surface is different here, but "I think I'm at the best stage of my career... physical, technical, mental, everything is getting better and better."

"To win 6-0, 6-0 means a lot to me because it means I stayed focused for the whole match," she added.

Against Pierce, Hingis said, "I have to be on top of my game, and I just have to try for every point, because she hits it very hard and she goes for a lot of winners."

Hingis allowed Basuki, a 1997 Wimbledon quarterfinalist, only 17 points in the 12 games. It was her first shutout on the women's pro tour.

Hingis said she likes the bigger crowds in the 15,000-centre court, and "I was a little upset playing on court 1, so I didn't want to stay out there too long."

That was a joke, she added.

No. 10 Anke Huber, a finalist here in 1996 in her best Grand Slam tournament to date, reached the quarters by coming back



Switzerland's Martina Hingis plays a backhand return to Indonesia's Yayuk Basuki. The World No. 1 and defending champion won the fourth round match 6-0 6-0 (Reuters photo)



Germany's Anke Huber plays a forehand during her fourth round match against South Africa's Amanda Coetzer. Huber defeated Coetzer 2-6 6-4 7-5 to advance to the quarter-finals (Reuters photo)



Spain's Conchita Martinez plays a backhand shot during her fourth round match against Austria's Barbara Schett. Martinez won in straight sets 6-3 6-3 (Reuters photo)



Japan's Ai Sugiyama lunges to return a shot to Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario during their fourth round match at the Australian Open. Sanchez Vicario won 6-2 6-4 (Reuters photo)

from 1-4 in the final set to beat No. 3 Amanda Coetzer, a semi-finalist the last two years, 2-6, 6-4, 7-5.

Huber now faces Sanchez Vicario, a former No. 1 who has won three Grand Slam tournaments, but none since the 1994 U.S. Open.

Sanchez Vicario beat No. 16 Ai Sugiyama 6-2, 6-4. Sugiyama had 13 break points, but converted only four, while Sanchez Vicario converted 7 of 10.

No. 8 Conchita Martinez advanced to the quarterfinals with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Austria's Barbara Schett.

No. 9 Sandrine Testud of France stopped the run of Thailand's Tamarine Tanasugarn, conqueror of French Open champion Iva Majoli, 3-6, 6-1, 6-2. She next plays Martinez.

France had mixed fortunes in men's action.

The only seed in the bottom half of the draw, No. 9 Marcelo Rios, reached the quarterfinals after having to bounce back from two sets down against Sweden's Magnus Larsson, from one set down against No. 14 Kuerten, and from two sets down against American Richey Reneberg.

French Open. But he since has won twice against French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten, including a second-round victory here.

The last Frenchman to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals was Guy Forget in 1993.

Still, he said, he is a little surprised to have reached the quarterfinals after having to bounce back from two sets down against Sweden's Magnus Larsson, from one set down against No. 14 Kuerten, and from two sets down against American Richey Reneberg.



Andre Agassi reacts to losing a point during his fourth round match against Spain's Alberto Berasategui at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Berasategui won the match 3-6 3-6 6-2 6-3 6-3 for a place in the quarter finals (Reuters photo)

Berasategui beats Agassi in 5 sets

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Spaniard Alberto Berasategui fought back from two sets down to knock American Andre Agassi out of the Australian Open tennis here Monday.

Berasategui, ranked 25 in the world, won the fourth-round match 3-6, 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 in two hours and 31 minutes.

The Spaniard will now play Chilean ninth seed Marcelo Rios in the quarterfinals. Rios is the last seed remaining in the bottom half of the draw.

Berasategui grew in stature and confidence in the third set and his lethal forehand came more into play — as it was when the Spaniard knocked second-seeded Pat Rafter of Australia out in the third round.

Agassi, the former World No. 1, won the first two sets in just over an hour and looked headed for a straight sets victory when Berasategui put up more resistance and got more balls back into the play.

Agassi began having trouble holding onto his serve and the breakthrough came for the persistent Spaniard with two service breaks in the sixth and eighth games to take the third set.

Agassi, trying to stop the match heading into a fifth set, broke Berasategui in the fifth game when the Spaniard put a forehand into the net, but he broke back in the next game to level at 3-3.

Berasategui's huge forehand again bad Agassi in trouble in the eighth game and he was broken again to trail 3-5.

The Spaniard served out for the set, finishing off set point with an ace, to take the match into a fifth set.

Agassi was broken in the third game, when he sent a forehand wide, but the American broke back in the fourth to level.

The tide was running against the tiring Agassi and Berasategui got to 15-40 on Agassi's serve in the fifth game and took another break with his big forehand.

Berasategui served out for 5-3 and broke Agassi for the eighth time in the next game to take the final set in 25 minutes to great jubilation among his entourage in the players' area.

Hingis not scared of unwanted fan

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Tennis star Martina Hingis said Monday she had no worries about her safety, following reports that Australian Open organisers had banned an unwanted fan.

A Melbourne newspaper said organisers had banned the man from the Grand Slam event after being tipped off about him by other tournaments.

But Hingis told a press conference: "I am not frightened at all. I think you have to ask someone about the security, bow it works. But I am fine."

The Melbourne Herald-Sun said the unnamed fan had sent the 17-year-old women's No. 1 player flowers and gifts and written to her.

She admitted she may have seen the man at a tournament but said she did not know his identity.

Hingis thrashed Yayuk Basuki of Indonesia in her fourth round match and commented: "I guess I don't feel very threatened when I play 6-0, 6-0."

Tennis security for nearly all the top women has been stepped up since Monica Seles was stabbed by a Steffi Graf fan at a tournament in Hamburg in 1993. Seles has never recovered her earlier status.

The Melbourne Herald Sun said security guards were under orders to stop

the man from entering Melbourne Park, and that he had already been refused entry once.

The newspaper said the fan had "made a nuisance of himself in his pursuit of the Swiss star" at other foreign tournaments.

It quoted security guards as saying the fan had not made threats of violence but was still considered a risk.

Tournament officials refused to comment. They said security was never discussed publicly.

The surge of teenaged talent such as Hingis, Russia's Anna Kournikova and the American sisters Venus and Serena Williams, has caused an increased security risk for tournament organisers.

Former Australian Open champion Mary Pierce of France has a fan with a pink mohican punk haircut who has been watching her every match in Melbourne for the past two years. Pierce said she had her photo taken with him but had not spoken to him.

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Juventus stay on course, but others lose their way

PARIS (AFP) — Juventus were crowned Italy's Winter Champions on Sunday after notching a 3-1 victory over Atalanta — but elsewhere in Europe most of the early season pacesetters lost ground.

In Spain both Real Madrid and Barcelona crashed to defeat — Real being beaten 2-2 at high-flying Real Sociedad while Barcelona's recent disaster run continued with a 3-1 loss at Deportivo.

And in France neither Metz nor Paris St Germain could pocket a point — PSG being jeered off the Parc des Princes pitch by their frustrated supporters after a dismal 2-0 defeat against Le Havre, and Metz losing 1-0 at home to Bastia.

Juventus could have won by an even more convincing margin against relegation strugglers Atalanta but they missed a penalty early in the second-half — Alberto Fontana pushing Alessandro Del Piero's spot-kick round the post for a corner.

Del Piero made amends soon afterwards when he set up a goal for skipper Antonio Conte, and although Nicola Cuccia levelled for Atalanta, Frenchman Zinedine Zidane headed Juventus back in front within sixty seconds.

Zidane then put the issue beyond doubt when he smashed home a third goal in injury-time to leave Juventus on top with 38 points — one point clear of rivals Inter.

Inter, who dominated the early season title race, were lucky to salvage a 1-1 draw at Empoli. Carmine Esposito gave the home side the lead after just three minutes when he chipped Inter goalkeeper Gianluca Pagliuca and although Ronaldo, who has not scored a league goal since December 6, had one effort disallowed, it was Empoli who continued to create the best chances.

Uruguayan Alvar Recoba finally levelled for Inter, however, with an extraordinary shot from almost the halfway line. But the scars of their 5-1 loss to AC Milan in the Italian Cup have clearly not healed.

Two first-half goals from German international Oliver Bierhoff set Udinese on their way to a historic 3-0 victory over Vicenza. Thomas Locatelli added the third, shortly before the break.

Parma's brief winning run came to an end when they went down 2-1 at lowly Brescia and AC Milan's poor league form continued when they were beaten 2-0 at home by Fiorentina.

Lazio started without two of their three strikers, with Alen Boksic injured and Pierluigi Casiraghi on the substitutes bench, but were still 1-0 winners over Bologna. And Napoli's misery continued with a 2-0 defeat at Bari — their 13th of the season.

Yugoslav international Darko Kovacevic scored twice in nine minutes as Real Sociedad stunned Real Madrid.

The former Sheffield Wednesday player was on target in the 38th and 46th minutes as the San Sebastian club moved into third place in the standings behind Barca and Real, but ahead of Atletico Madrid.

Austrian Dietmar Kuehnbauer and defender Agustin Aranzabal were the other marksmen for Real Sociedad, while Fernando Morientes and Brazilian Roberto Carlos netted for Real.

Barcelona's defeat was inflicted by goals from Fran Gonzalez, Uruguayan Sebastian Abreu and Brazilian Djalminha. Barcelona, who have now conceded 13 goals in their last four games and who could manage only a late consolation goal from Juan Antonio Pizzi, still trail Real by two points. There were plenty of goals elsewhere.

Valencia went on a goalscoring spree with a 6-1 triumph over Racing Santander with Romanian international Adrian Ilie grabbing a hat-trick, and Tenerife swamped Compostella 5-1 with Julio Llorente netting twice.

Italian international striker Christian Vieri also scored two goals taking his total for the season to 11 as he helped Atletico Bilbao 3-0 defeat Athletic Bilbao 3-0.

Cyrille Pouget scored twice against his former club as lowly Le Havre stunned Paris Saint Germain. The former French international netted in the 23rd and 72nd minutes.

And leaders Metz squandered an opportunity to pull four points clear when Bastia's Adrian Kozniku scored the only goal of the clash after 30 minutes.

The defeats enabled defending champions Monaco to leapfrog PSG thanks to a 4-0 win at home to Montpellier — David Trezeguet taking his season tally to 13 with a hat-trick for Monaco.

Marseille also moved up after a 3-0 win over Chateauroux — the goals coming from Xavier Gravelaine, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Laurent Blanc.

Lens, meanwhile, won 2-1 at Toulouse while Bordeaux and struggling Strasbourg played out a thrilling 4-4 draw at the Parc Lescur where the visitors grabbing a point thanks to a goal in the penultimate minute from Pascal Nouma.

Rennes, who began the weekend bottom of the standings, boosted their chances of avoiding relegation with a 2-0 home win over fellow strugglers Cannes thanks to second-half goals from Patrick Weker and Nicolas Gousse.

And in Sunday's matches Lyon moved up to sixth place with a 1-0 victory over Auxerre while Nantes defeated visiting Guingamp 2-0.

Jazz beat Bulls

CHICAGO (AFP) — Karl Malone scored 35 points and 11 rebounds, despite the presence of Dennis Rodman, as the Utah Jazz did what they couldn't realise in last year's NBA finals, win at the United Center.

The Jazz handed the Chicago Bulls a 101-94 loss, just their second at home this season and their first against a Western Conference opponent in nearly three years.

Howard Easley added 14 points off the bench for Utah which has won four of its last five games and 11 of 13 to reach the season's midpoint at 28-13, the same record they had last season when they won 64 games and earned their first berth in the finals.

The Jazz had dropped three of the last four regular season matchups with the Bulls and lost to them in six games in last year's final, including the three at Chicago as the Bulls won their second consecutive title and fifth in seven years.

"This is still not a big deal," said Jazz guard Jeff Hornacek. "It really has no significance except it is a win on the road for us. The only statement you can make against the Bulls is to beat them in the playoffs. We had our chances last year and we didn't take advantage of them. Maybe if we get back to the Finals, we can look to this game for extra confidence."

"There's no revenge factor involved," added Malone. "We played well, but it had nothing to do with last year."

But Michael Jordan didn't like it. "I don't think we matched the intensity that Utah had tonight," he said. "I hate to lose. Right now it just sticks with me because we don't want a team coming in here and beating us."

Chicago had not lost at United Center to a Western Conference team since he returned from retirement in February 1995, spanning 38 games including playoffs.

With the defeat, Bulls coach Phil Jackson lost the opportunity to coach the Eastern Conference All-Star squad. The Bulls are now 30-13 (.698) just percentage points behind rookie coach Larry Bird and the Indiana Pacers (28-12, .700).

"I'm happy about it," added Jackson about not coaching in the All-Star Game. "As you know I don't like to go to those things, and I thank the players personally for it."

Broncos claim NFL crown

SAN DIEGO (AFP) — Terrell Davis scored a Super Bowl record three touchdowns and the Denver Broncos derailed a fledgling Green Bay dynasty here Sunday with a 31-24 upset triumph in Super Bowl XXXII.

Quarterback John Elway, who suffered through three of Denver's four previous Super Bowl defeats, finally got a Super Bowl ring to go with his league-leading career total of 138 regular season victories.

The victory also ended a run of 13 National Conference victories in the National Football League championship game.

"I am so proud that this team came together," Elway said of Davis and his teammates. "We did it the hard way, but for all the Broncos fans that never had this feeling, we finally got it done."

They couldn't have done it without Davis, who shrugged off what he thought was a migraine headache to carry the ball 30 times for 157 yards and a Super Bowl record three touchdowns, including the game-winner with 1:45 left.

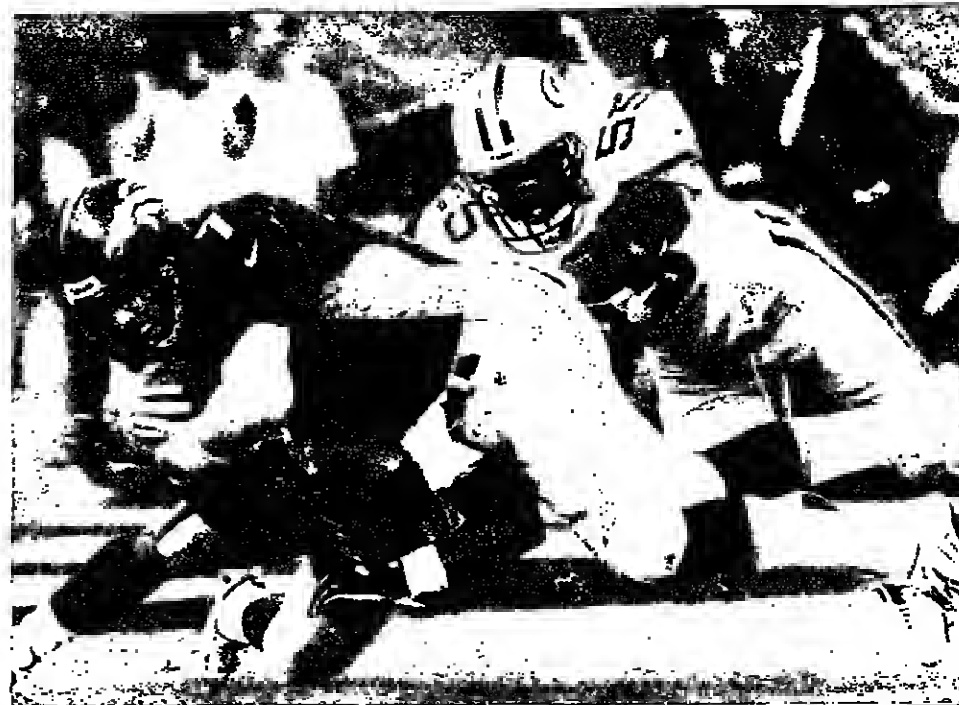
"I'm numb right now," said Davis, who had to leave the field and take medication before halftime because of blurred vision.

"All I wanted to do was come out and play well, do what I do well and run the ball hard," Davis said. "Our line did a great job. All I had to do was run. My job was easy."

He certainly made it look that way against a Packers team who were heavy favourites to win their second title in a row.

Denver's offensive line, the smallest in the NFL, consistently opened holes for Davis against a Green Bay defensive line that featured 345-pound nose tackle Gilbert Brown and 303-pound end Reggie White.

The score was tied 24-24 when Denver took over at the Green Bay 49 yard line with three and a half minutes left.



Denver Broncos quarterback John Elway carries the ball for nine yards for a first down in the first quarter as he is tackled by Green Bay Packers players LeRoy Butler (L) and Bernardo Harris (R) at Super Bowl XXXII at San Diego's Qualcomm Stadium. Reuters photo

On the first play, Packers defensive end Darius Holland was penalised 15 yards for grabbing Davis' facemask.

One play later, Howard Griffith caught a shallow pass from Elway and turned it into a 23-yard gain to the Green Bay eight yard line.

Davis raced around left end for a seven-yard gain on the next play, but it was teammate Shannon Sharpe who was penalised 10 yards for holding.

On the next play, Davis ran left behind tackle Gary Zimmerman, gaining 17 yards before he was pushed out of bounds just short of a goal.

He stroled through a gaping hole for the final touchdown.

The Packers had a chance to force the first overtime in Super Bowl history, until three straight incompletions from Green Bay quarterback Brett Favre ended the drive.

Favre, who won his third straight NFL MVP award this season, completed 25-

of-42 passes for 256 yards and three touchdowns with one interception. Antonio Freeman had nine catches for 126 yards and Dorsey Levens rushed for 90 yards.

Elway completed 12-of-22 passes for 123 yards and one interception. But he also scored on a one-yard run and made a handful of key plays.

Minutes into the second half, Green Bay knotted the score at 17-17 on Ryan Longwell's field goal. Green Bay defender Brian Williams set up the score when he knocked the ball loose from Davis and recovered the fumble.

The Broncos regained the upper hand again with a 13-play, 92-yard drive that ended with Davis' one-yard touchdown drive.

Denver had a golden opportunity to press their advantage when Packers receiver Antonio Freeman fumbled the ensuing kick off return and Tim McKeyer recovered at the 22-yard line.

But Elway's potential scoring pass intended for

Rod Smith was intercepted in the end zone by Eugene Robinson.

"We had a chance to put a little pressure on them," Shanahan said. "We had a chance to put some separation, Eugene made a good play by getting over to the receiver. When you play a great team like Green Bay, they're going to make some plays. I was really pleased with the way we responded."

Favre leapt on the mistake, engineering a drive that ended with a 13-yard scoring pass to Freeman that made it 24-24.

Overall, however, Denver got the better in the turnover battle. Two first-half turnovers by Favre, an interception and a fumble forced by a sack, led to 10 Denver points.

"You can't give a good football team points like that, especially in a game like this," Favre said of the turnovers. "We knew what we had to do. I said turnovers would be a crucial part of the game, and they were."

Iraq breathes football, its 'oxygen' in era of sanctions

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Football, the "oxygen" of the Iraqi people, has suffered but is surviving as a rare source of pleasure in a country impoverished by sanctions.

"Football is the beloved game of us Iraqis. In every home, people talk football," said coach Amu Baba, a legend in the sport around the Arab world. "I tell my players to go out and play well for the sake of the crowd. At least it'll make them happy for a few days," he said.

But since the U.N. embargo slapped on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the game has been drained of much of its talent, with players and coaches alike going abroad in search of better pay.

Amu Baba said Iraqi football has also deteriorated because of the scarcity of exposure to matches from around the world on local TV screens. "Sometimes our president, Mr. Uday, sends us videos of matches in England or Brazil. But it's not enough, you have to be able to live and breathe football. It changes every day," he said.

The 64-year-old coach, once the top scorer of Iraq's national team who was approached by British teams like Fulham and Celtic in the 1950s, was referring to President Saddam Hussein's son Uday, who presides over both Iraq's Football Association and Olympic committee.

The national team's mascot, Khadduri, who is famous for his deafening cries from the stands, bemoaned the fact that "the level of football in Iraq has plunged, technically speaking."

Once a regional power in footballing terms, the team was eliminated from the qualifiers of the World Cup in France by lowly Kazakhstan last year.

Before the sanctions, which led to three years of total isolation for Iraqi sport, Khadduri used to travel to every away match of the national team.

Because of his reputation for enthusing a crowd, he has recently been offered a contract just to support a club in Qatar but declined to desert for personal reasons.

"Football is like oxygen for the people, a chance to get away from their everyday troubles," said Mahdi Saleh, a taxi-driver who is likewise a football fanatic.

But Amu Baba said the supporters ask for too much of his players and forget that they too have been hit by the sanctions.

"The players often complain that they don't get enough to eat and their vitamin intake is low. They just can't handle the training," he said. "As for new training shoes or football boots, they're too expensive."

Amu Baba, an admirer of English football, admitted that his own skills have not kept up with the times. He last attended a training course abroad in 1989, at the London club Chelsea.

Iraq's "temple of football," Al-Shaab, has an official capacity of 40,000 but is crammed to the rafters with up to 50,000 supporters for big games. It was inaugurated in 1967 by Eusebio of Portugal.

Tickets start at a modest 150 dinars and can cost as much as 1,000 dinars, in a country where a teacher is paid a meagre 1,500 dinars (less than \$2) and has to take on a second or third job to survive.

The professionals earn between 500,000 and 200,000 dinars a season.

"Having to live without Adidas or Puma team strips and making our own is all right. The worst thing is the lack of foreign experience, contact with the game abroad," said Walid Tabra, editor of the sports daily Al-Baath Riyadi.

"I used to write for a London magazine on world soccer, but since 1990 they're not interested in our results any more," he said.

At the end of this month, the top four clubs will start competing for the "Mother of All Battles" Cup, named after the 1991 Gulf War over Kuwait. "The streets of Baghdad will be deserted," predicted Amu Baba.

Bubka still top of the pole


DONETSK, Ukraine (AFP) — Pole vault world record holder and six-time world champion Sergei Bubka of the Ukraine won the ninth "Star Pole-vaulters" tournament with a 5.80m clearance here on Sunday.

American vaulter Dean Starkey was runner-up with 5.70m and Petr Widen of Sweden finished third with the same clearance, losing on previous failed attempts.

Bubka made a nervous start as he failed on his first two attempts at his starting height of 5.60 m. However, having cleared it on the last attempt he then scaled 5.80m to take the first prize.

Bubka also made an attempt on his world record of 6.16 m but failed in all three attempts. "This time I couldn't keep myself concentrated during the competition because I have to solve some organisational problems," Bubka explained.

France's Olympic champion Jean Galfione had a miserable day failing to clear his starting height of 5.50 m.






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